



# a master gardener in our midst

Many begin their summer gardens in May or even June, once the ground has warmed and the fear of frost has passed. **Karen Gibbs**, Luther Manor's Chief Clinical Officer, begins hers much, much earlier. Using grow lights, she plants her seeds indoors, cultivating them through the end of winter's dark months.

Among the many benefits, the head start often leads to a more plentiful harvest.

Karen approaches her role overseeing clinical staff at Luther Manor in much the same way. She nurtures her employees – starting in the earliest of days -- so that they succeed in their careers.

Like a plant that needs healthy soil in which to grow, nurses, CNAs and other clinical staff members also thrive in the right environment. And so Karen has set about creating a culture where people will want to work, can find support when they need it, and see space for growth.

Prioritizing her role as a mentor, Karen listens to staff members and helps them set goals. Instead of clinging to the outdated notion of hiring a certified nursing assistant (CNA) with the hope that they will stay for 20 years, she helps staff members reach their goals even if it means leaving Luther Manor. It is a part of "growing the pipeline," she believes.

Shemara Day is one of her brightest examples. Shemara was working at Luther Manor as a resident care aide (RCA). When Shemara expressed a desire to become a nurse, Karen encouraged her to go for it, even if it meant that she would be losing a good staff member as a result. Two years later, Shemara sent Karen a text-- a picture of her walking across the graduation stage. Karen's encouragement had produced fruit: Shemara ended up returning to Luther Manor as a nurse. She referred a few staff members to Luther Manor, too.

This approach took root during the pandemic. "I felt that during this time, I grew mostly from a leadership perspective.... So instead of me being that transactional leader, or that transformational leader, I feel that I moved into a

servant leader because I understand the role that God has given me in this life. And it's not to lead people to where I want them to be, but to help them get to where they need to be."

Creating fertile ground for CNAs, nurses, and other staff members to grow has also meant providing tools and training to managers. In 2023, Karen launched the Studer Leadership Program at Luther Manor. The program helps the managers sharpen their strategies and skills so that those they manage feel that they have "a voice at the table."

In addition to fostering the growth of her current staff, Karen also hires new staff. One of the pandemic's lasting effects is the labor shortage, a challenge that Karen confronts with creative thinking.

For starters, Luther Manor partners with the State of Wisconsin through the WISCaregiver program. Using it, Luther Manor hires CNAs, helps them receive their certification with an outside CNA teacher, and then provides clinical training at Luther Manor. The program is free to accepted applicants and a bonus is given to hires who remain at their chosen long-term care setting for six months.

It is a step in the right direction, Karen says, but also an issue is a shortage of CNA teachers. And so, she is currently launching a CNA school right within Luther Manor.

Karen began serving as Luther Manor's Chief Clinical Officer in 2021 following three years as a Luther Manor board member and over twenty years of working in healthcare in both acute care and senior living settings. Her role at Luther Manor is a culmination of these experiences.

"My passion is senior care and supporting them (the residents) and giving them the quality of life that they deserve. But then the other part that I am passionate about is mentoring others and helping them enjoy their journey in healthcare. And this position allows me to do both," Karen said.

# By the Numbers

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**Karen Gibbs,**  
Luther Manor Chief Clinical Officer

**41 Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs)**

**43 Resident Care Aides (RCAs)**

**22 Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)**

**23 Registered Nurses (RNs)**

**225 Residents Receiving Nursing Care\***

**128 Residents Receiving Assistance with Daily Living Activities\***

*\*Between January & April, 2023*

