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Cathedral Square Announces Vermont's First Memory-Care Residence for Low-Income Vermonters with Alzheimer's & Other Forms of Dementia

WILLISTON, VT – In another first for Vermont, work is underway by the nonprofit Cathedral Square Corporation to create the state's first affordable residence for Medicaid recipients who are living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

The announcement came at a press conference today in Williston outside the former Respite House operated by the Visiting Nurse Association of Chittenden & Grand Isle Counties, where the licensed-care facility will be located. Cathedral Square purchased the property from the VNA in September with major investments from the University of Vermont Medical Center, the Hoehl Family Foundation and the Amy Tarrant Foundation, as well as financial support from the Fountain Fund and several area businesses and organizations.

Cathedral Square is renovating the building to provide 14 homes with a safe and secure environment where residents will receive licensed, round-the-clock memory care. The residence, to be named Memory Care at Allen Brook, is slated to open in early 2018.

The growing need for memory care in Vermont is reflected by the fact that, based on median age, Vermont is the second oldest state in the nation and soon will be the oldest, with the number of Vermonters living with Alzheimer's projected to increase 42% by 2025. While there are numerous *private* memory-care facilities in our region, average costs exceed \$9,000 a month, and none of them accepts Medicaid recipients at the time of admission. Moreover, most of these facilities cannot continue caring for residents who deplete their savings and become eligible for Medicaid.

It is not uncommon for those who wind up in hospital emergency rooms to have nowhere to go after receiving treatment, according to the UVM Medical Center, which has invested \$250,000 in the Cathedral Square project.

"We are proud to invest in this effort to provide affordable housing for low-income Vermonters in need of care for Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and build on our history of successful partnership with Cathedral Square" said Eileen Whalen, MHA, RN, president and chief operating officer of the University of Vermont Medical Center. "For patients who no longer need inpatient care in the hospital, this residence will provide them with high-level care in a comfortable environment."

In addition to funding from the UVM Medical Center, Cathedral Square has received \$200,000 from the Hoehl Family Foundation, \$100,000 from the Amy Tarrant Foundation and \$5,000 from the Fountain Fund to support the project. The Vermont Community Loan Fund is providing additional financing. The total cost of the project exceeds \$1.6 million, and fundraising efforts are continuing.

"Opening an affordable memory care residence has long been a dream of Cathedral Square, and we are extremely grateful to the UVM Medical Center, the Hoehl Family Foundation, the Amy Tarrant Foundation and

others who are helping us create Vermont's first affordable memory-care residence, which is so desperately needed," Fitzgerald said, adding that Cathedral Square is uniquely qualified to undertake this effort.

"We have 14 years' experience in assisted living, and we know what is needed in terms of care, food, services and programming to support the highest possible quality of life," she said. "We will have an average patient-to-staff ratio of 5:1 and provide 'telehealth' on site, so residents will be able to avoid disruptive trips to medical appointments."

In addition, Cathedral Square is partnering with the Alzheimer's Association for dementia-care training for staff, programming for residents, and family supports, she said.

Martha Richardson, executive director of the Vermont chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, was among those speaking at the press conference. Noting the desperate calls for help that her organization receives from family members of people with Alzheimer's disease, she cited the "tremendous need in our community for an assisted-living residence for low-income Vermonters with dementia. Life with dementia is extremely difficult even if you have wealth," she said. "If you are without means, there is quite literally nowhere to go."

Hinesburg resident Karen Pike backed up that statement with her personal story of what she called a "broken system." Her mother has dementia and has depleted her \$400,000 in savings to pay for private memory care. By January, she will have less than \$10,000 remaining — enough for just one more month of care — at which point she will be able to apply for Medicaid but will have to move out of the facility where she has been receiving care.

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ABOUT CATHEDRAL SQUARE: *Founded in Vermont in 1977, Cathedral Square is a national leader in the development of affordable, service-enriched housing communities for low- and modest-income older adults and individuals with special needs. Guided by its mission to advance "healthy homes, caring communities and positive aging," the nonprofit has helped create more than 1,400 affordable homes in Vermont. In 2009 it developed the nationally recognized Support and Services at Home (SASH[®]) program, a care-management model shown to improve health outcomes, reduce the growth in Medicare expenditures and help people age with dignity, in health and security, in the comfort of home.*