

Dementia-Friendly is Not a Program. It's a Posture.

By Larry Carlson, Advisor with Landis Communities

What do I usually get?

Sara looks at her daughter, Mary, then back up at the menu—uncertain. There's a pause—the kind that can tighten a moment.

Mary starts to answer—just slightly—then stops.

Daniel, standing behind the counter, doesn't rush.

Doesn't correct.

Doesn't look past Sara for confirmation.

He leans in just a bit. "Sometimes a coffee feels just right," he says.

"And we have a cinnamon pastry today that's been a favorite."

Mary exhales—quietly.

Sara smiles.

"That sounds good."

And just like that, the moment moves forward—

not fixed, not forced...

but held with dignity.

Moments like this don't happen by accident.

We often think of dementia care as something that takes place in a specific setting—a memory care unit, a specialized program, a clinical environment designed for safety and supervision. And those settings matter. They play an important role.

But what happened in that café wasn't about a program.

It was about a posture.

A way of seeing.

A way of responding.

A way of holding a moment that could have easily gone another direction.



At Landis Communities, there is an emerging effort called Lumina—an intentional move toward becoming a more dementia-friendly community. What stands out is not simply the initiative itself, but the recognition behind it: that dementia is not confined to one part of a campus. It touches dining areas, walking paths, fitness centers, front desks—every place where life is lived.

That understanding changes everything.

It means that the person serving coffee, the receptionist greeting guests, the staff member passing in the hallway—all become part of the experience. Not as specialists, but as participants in a shared responsibility to respond with awareness, patience, and respect.

Efforts like Lumina matter.

They represent a shift—from seeing dementia care as a service line, to recognizing it as something woven into the fabric of daily life. At Landis, that shift is being supported in a tangible way, with training extended across the entire staff, equipping people in every role to engage with greater understanding and empathy.

And when that kind of posture begins to take hold, something deeper starts to happen.

Moments change.

Tension softens.

Dignity is preserved.

Families exhale.

Not because every situation is resolved perfectly—but because it is handled with care.

If taken seriously, this kind of approach points beyond any single initiative. It begins to suggest that the future of dementia care may not be defined primarily by buildings or designated spaces, but by communities that know how to respond. Places where individuals living with dementia can move through everyday environments—not set apart from them—and still be met with understanding.

That's a different vision.

And it doesn't start with architecture.

It starts with posture.

What's emerging in efforts like Lumina is a signal of what's possible. Not a finished model, but a meaningful step—one that invites a broader question for all of those involved in aging services:

What would it look like if dementia-friendly wasn't something we implemented... but something we became?

