

CASE STUDY

Otterbein St. Marys

A Culture of Compassion and Purpose

The staff and residents of Otterbein St. Marys celebrated being named a LeadingAge Ohio gold Employer of Choice with a party complete with lots of food and special T-shirts. Celebrations like these are commonplace for this close-knit community, where compassion and care is a two-way street.

“At St. Marys, we are a community that cares for each other,” said Melissa Smalley, executive director of Otterbein St. Marys. “When you come here, you feel the love and spirit of our campus.”

“We feel that everyone has a calling and a purpose,” said Smalley. “We talk to partners a lot about what attracted them to Otterbein and help them identify their purpose. When you connect to a purpose every day, you want to stay there.”



Though recruiting is a struggle, as it is for most senior living communities, helping partners find their purpose is a key factor in recruiting and retaining employees at St. Marys.

To make sure they invest in the right job candidates, St. Marys relies on the Otterbein Experience, a framework that defines 21 behaviors, such as acknowledging the contributions of others and engaging in open, respectful communications, which are necessary to help the community fulfill its mission and provide excellent care. Hiring based on these behaviors and the character of candidates has helped St. Marys exceed in retaining employees beyond the crucial first 90 days.

“These are not easy jobs,” said Smalley. “But we all love where we work and we want it to be the best.”

In addition to exceeding criteria in employee engagement, resident satisfaction and 90-day turnover, St. Marys also exceeded Employer of Choice criteria in financial strength, benefits, agency use and evaluations.



This strong sense of community is one of the reasons St. Marys exceeded Employer of Choice criteria for employee engagement and resident satisfaction.

According to Smalley, residents care a great deal about employees, who are referred to as partners.

Residents demonstrate their support through a variety of ways, including raising funds to throw an annual party for staff members. In 2017, residents raised \$20,000, which went toward refreshments for the party, as well as gift cards for the community’s 200 partners.

Partners at St. Marys also have the full support of leadership, who greatly value their employees and have created a supportive culture that’s driven by mission and purpose.

**“WHEN YOU CONNECT TO A PURPOSE EVERY DAY,
YOU WANT TO STAY THERE.”**

— MELISSA SMALLEY

About Employer of Choice

Established in 2017, the Employer of Choice (EOC) program recognizes LeadingAge Ohio members who demonstrate leadership in employee development and engagement. The EOC program, which is evaluated annually, has established standards for strengthening employee engagement and workforce practices for individual locations and communities. Visit www.leadingageohio.org for more information.