

On Westerly's Geri Psych Unit, new artwork is safe, and possibly therapeutic



Mental Health Counselor Ashley Izzi shows off a photo of downtown Westerly on the wall in the Geriatric Psychiatry unit at Westerly Hospital.

Do thoughts of Rhode Island beaches put a smile on your face? Does the lighthouse at Watch Hill or perhaps the Ocean House hotel stir fond memories? Do scenes from downtown Westerly remind you of happier times?

A picture is not only worth a thousand words. On the Geriatric Psychiatry unit at Westerly Hospital, photographs are sparking memories, helping light the minds and hearts of patients who may be suffering from dementia or other forms of mental illness.

It's also true, of course, that the new photographs of local scenes are ligature free, with no wires, no sharp edges, and shatter-proof frames anchored to the walls, standard requirements for any wall hangings on a modern psychiatric unit. It's the artistic local charm radiating from the images, however, that really sets them apart.

"The idea was to try to have the unit represent what the patient population might recognize from the area, to make them feel more comfortable, more at home," said Lisa Goyette, nurse manager on the unit.



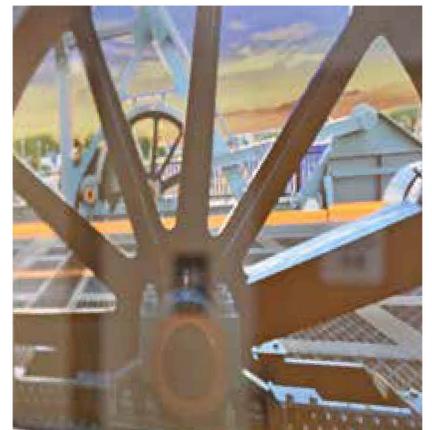
A sailboat near Watch Hill.

"Possibly, if someone has Alzheimer's disease, an image might help elicit a memory. People with dementia or other types of mental health illness often have memory issues, so the feeling is that these paintings could help

spark a memory, or positive feelings, which could be beneficial to their care."

Pictured on this page are a few samples of how this new unit at Westerly Hospital is raising the bar on what it means to offer a holistic experience for patients in geriatric psychiatry.

"I've been in Psychiatry for 26 years and this unit is just phenomenal," Goyette said, noting that the unit opened last September. "I've worked in many different places and this is one of the most thoughtful units that I've ever seen put together, anywhere. Combine that with our amazing staff and this place is truly something special."



A close-up of the Mystic River drawbridge.



The Ocean House hotel at Watch Hill.



Lisa Goyette, nurse manager for Geriatric Psychiatry at Westerly Hospital, shows off her favorite photo on the unit – a beluga whale.

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Senior Editor: Bill Hanrahan

Contributing Writers: Christine Cooke, Fiona Phelan, Zakkyya Williams

Your story ideas and comments are welcome:

Call 860-442-0711, ext. 4979, or email William.Hanrahan@lmhosp.org.