

Berwyn's Widger family and Elwyn open unique group home, Clark's Manor

October 21, 2020



Chuck and Barbara Widger at Clark's Manor.

Clark Widger, a former Conestoga athlete with chronic mental illness, has come home. And he – and his family – couldn't be happier.

After four years at a similar program in Massachusetts, Widger, 37, is settling into life in a lovely 10,000 sq. ft. home off N. Providence Rd. in Media that bears his name – Clark's Manor.

And he's ready for company.

Funded by the Widger Family Foundation and run by Elwyn, the nonprofit behavioral health giant down the road, Clark's Manor is a unique "milieu" style program, designed as a safe haven for adults with chronic mental health challenges.

Residents live together as a family. They spend their days out in the community – working, taking classes, exercising, going to doctor's appointments – and return home to have dinner together.

Clark Widger is the first resident and there's room for seven more in the refurbished stone estate on four acres. His mother, Barbara, took a lead in redesigning the home for comfort and privacy.



The kitchen at Clark's Manor.

The program is geared to adults who are stable and committed to their treatment but need extra support. Staff are all master's trained clinicians. They don't live on site but are there 24/7 to help residents be as successful and productive as possible.

"It's like having a life coach with you on a daily basis to give you that extra nudge," says Elwyn VP of Advancement Meg Kraftson. Shifts overlap by as much as two hours to ensure continuity of support.

Clark had great success in collaborative living at Wild Acre, an innovator in the Boston area – working part-time, taking art classes at BU, going to the gym and skateboarding.



The living room at Clark's Manor.

But Boston's not around the corner and his parents and sister – Charles, Barbara and Ashley Widger – were determined to replicate the program closer to their Berwyn home.

**“There's nothing like this in the tri-state area,” Kraftson says.
“There was a big void between Massachusetts and Baltimore.”**

Developed after consulting Penn Medicine and Main Line Health, Clark's Manor is a “small, unique and highly individualized program,” she says. “But for the people who have this kind of need, it can be life-changing.”

The staff helps residents find personalized opportunities in the community – not just one-size-fits-all list. For Clark, that meant finding art classes (online for now), skateboarding routes and comic book stores, with more to come post-pandemic.

“He's over the moon to be here and proud to be part of something that he hopes can help other people as well,” says Kraftson.

Clark's father, Chuck Widger, is the leading benefactor of the Villanova Charles Widger School of Law and the founder of Brinker Capital, a leading investment firm in Berwyn.

The Widger Family Foundation bought the Media estate and is committed to Clark's Manor in perpetuity.

Families interested in learning more about Clark's Manor are invited to contact Art Fastman, Director of Operations, at art.fastman@elwyn.org or call 610-675-7669.

*This article first appeared in Savvy Main Line: Caroline O'Halloran, 2020, Savvy Main Line, “Berwyn's Widger family and Elwyn open unique group home, Clark's Manor”, Savvy Main Line, October 21.