

# Clark's Manor: A new safe haven where mental health care is woven into daily life

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Clark's Manor on Providence Road in Media, the region's first "milieu" model home, has space for five more adults with chronic mental illness.

Traditional counseling sessions have their place, but for adults with chronic mental illness, a little subtle therapy can go a long way.

That's the secret sauce at Clark's Manor, a four-acre Media estate that's now home to former Conestoga athlete Clark Widger and two other adults with chronic mental illness.

The farmhouse is 10,000 square feet with enough private bedrooms for five more residents.

Run by the behavioral health pros at Elwyn, Clark's Manor is downright lovely – unlike some group homes. Its clinical care – delivered by highly trained and educated staff – is top-notch but low-key.

Adults are respected as fellow adults. Residents might head out to a job, pursue a hobby or just have fun during the day, then reconvene to have family-style dinner together at night.



Music enthusiast Clark Widger, Conestoga '02, jams in the Music and Arts Studio (above), one of many subtly therapeutic spaces at Clark's Manor. (Below) he practices keyboarding in the living room.



In recent months, you may have spotted Clark Widger or his new housemates at George's Music in Berwyn, the King of Prussia Mall, a Phillies game, Wegmans or on a go-cart at Arnold's in Phoenixville.

"Our residents love a Wawa hoagie and enjoy food shopping, the YMCA, the local church and nearby Ridley Creek State Park," says Clinical Care Manager Melanie Coupland. One even works out with a personal trainer.

**"Residents have learned to utilize one another as a way to work toward their goals of getting back into the community,"** adds another care manager, Rachel Jernejcic.



One of Clark Widger's many hobbies: skateboarding the grounds of Clark's Manor with Jerome, the pug owned by Clinical Care Manager Mell Coupland.

Clark's Manor uses the innovative "milieu model" – a holistic approach to chronic mental illness that keeps residents connected to personal, family, professional and community supports. Sure, there are controlled therapy sessions but much of the therapy is subtle and occurs naturally in community settings or in the safe confines of the home.

Woven into daily activities are proven techniques like cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing and mindfulness-based stress reduction.

The care team helps residents define what they want to do and works with them to create a plan to help them do it, systematically removing obstacles. For example, they might practice social skills, baking a favorite dessert or sorting laundry, or strategize ways to enjoy a family wedding.

Residents will soon have the benefit of participating in an art therapy program and a personalized nutrition program. Cognitive remediation, in partnership with Penn Medicine, will soon follow.

With two new members, "the Manor's vibe has become more fun," says Coupland. "We've been out and about more. We're more like a family."

**Families interested in learning more about Clark's Manor are invited to contact Art Fastman, Director of Operations, at [Art.Fastman@elwyn.org](mailto:Art.Fastman@elwyn.org) or call 610-675-7669.**

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