



Birchwood Cottages

COMMUNITY UPDATES

Grow your health care career with us!

Be a part of a supportive team that is dedicated to our residents and creating a culture of excellence!

- Training provided
- Free employee meals
- Benefits including 401K
- Priceless memories
- Valuable experience

[View Opportunities](#)

HAPPY SPRING

I am excited to start the spring months talking about our Life Enrichment teams in this issue of our newsletter! Our days at Birchwood are filled with laughter and fun because of the dedication and passion these individuals bring to the communities each and every day.

In other exciting news, back in February, Birchwood received recognition in being a leader in quality. This recognition highlights our dedication to providing the best care for your loved one. We work to meet that commitment by continually focusing on quality improvement measures that align with our mission, and values to be a leader in memory care. Link for more info on this progressive award is below!

- Andrea Rupe, LALD
Vice President of Business Operations



Birchwood Cottages has been recognized as a leader in quality by LeadingAge Minnesota! [Read more about this accomplishment here!](#)



MEET OUR LIFE ENRICHMENT TEAMS!

NORTH MANKATO

JEN SHARP

Life Enrichment Coordinator | jens@birchwoodcottagesmn.com



Hi, my name is Jen Sharp! I am the Life Enrichment Coordinator here at Birchwood Cottages in North Mankato. I'm mom to Emmi who is graduating from high school in June. We have lived in North Mankato since 2016.

I've been with Birchwood since they opened in June of 2018 and started out as a Caregiver. This was all a new adventure for me and realized rather quickly that it was my niche. I was familiar with memory loss as my grandparents passed from this and have an aunt & uncle currently living with dementia.

I enjoy engaging with our residents and had the opportunity to pursue the Life Enrichment Coordinator position. I have been in this role since August of 2022 and absolutely love it! My love of crafts, baking and planning various activities has been very fulfilling and fun to share with our residents.

The relationships I have with our residents is so rewarding. I believe life gives you what you give it. If you bring happiness to others, you will find happiness!

SHARI RICH

Life Enrichment Assistant

Hello, I am Shari! I have been married to my husband Bill for four years. I have two children, Jordan and Kayli, and three grandchildren. North Mankato has been home to me all my life except for two years when I lived in south-east Texas. My favorite hobbies include diamond painting and rock hunting.

I've been known to "Talk 4-2", aka a ventriloquist! Sharing this with residents, seeing their smiles as they meet Daisy (my skunk) makes my heart happy.

Working at Birchwood Cottages brings me so much JOY! I love seeing the residents' faces light up with this joy during an activity or simply a one-on-one activity.

Do I have any regrets? Yes. Only that I wish I had discovered this field of work in my earlier years!



MEET OUR LIFE ENRICHMENT TEAMS!

NORTH MANKATO

MARYANNE DUNDAS

Life Enrichment Assistant



Hello I am Mary Anne! I came to Birchwood in August of 2020. I love the "home-like" atmosphere and the fact that it feels like I have 30 moms and dads to spend my days with.

Music is my passion and I love to share my voice with the residents.

When I'm not at work you can find me performing at the senior communities or on stage with the local community theater.



MEET OUR LIFE ENRICHMENT TEAMS!

OWATONNA

KAREN SPEARS

Life Enrichment Coordinator | karens@birchwoodcottagesmn.com

Hello! My name is Karen Spears and I am the Life enrichment Coordinator here at Birchwood Cottages.

I have been married to my husband JD for 25 years. We have 2 beautiful girls. Sarah is 22 and going to school in Mankato to become a nurse. Our daughter Sammie Joy is 19 and going to college in St. Paul to become a therapist. We have a Yorkie who's name is Wesley and he is 4 years old. When not at work I am working on home projects or keeping busy with baking things for friends and family.

My grandmother was at Birchwood when they first opened their first building. I just love the "homie" feel you get from being in the building. I did daycare for 13 years and wanted something different. I went to a job fair and they had a booth and I just went to talk to the girls. Found out they were needing an aid in the south building. 4 years later and I am here still loving this job and loving the people I work for and with. This job fulfills my heart and soul. I have never had a job that I love as much as this one. I enjoy coming to work every day.

I love that Birchwood wants you to feel like you are home. The residents are such a joy to be around. You can learn something even at age 53 from these amazing people here and I am truly blessed each and every day.



TERRY BAIRD

Life Enrichment Assistant

Hi my name is Terry Baird!

I moved to Owatonna in 2015 and was working for Bon Appetit in the Federated Insurance buildings.

Working in the FOH (Front of House) department I enjoyed greeting customers and coordinating barista and cashier duties. I found the Activities Assistant position last fall while searching for an "of-service" position.

Working in memory care and activities is new for me and I am enjoying it very much. Thank you Birchwood and all the people, (residents, staff and families) who have built this caring community.



MEET OUR LIFE ENRICHMENT TEAMS!

OWATONNA

KARENA JENKINS

Life Enrichment Assistant



My name is Karena Jenkins. I am the Life enrichment assistant in our south building. I am blessed with 2 children. Our daughter is Brittney (25) and our son Harley (17). When I'm not at work I am enjoying spending time outside with family at the cabin or going on motorcycle rides with my husband. I try to appreciate the little things in life.

Why memory care? I decided to make a change in my career after working for the Owatonna School district for 17 years. Being able to help and care for others is a passion of mine. I enjoy spending time with the residents, they are like family to me.

At Birchwood they want you to feel like one big family. They give attention, respect and dignity to each resident. I know this every day and I feel it has brought me and my life to a full circle.

ALI SLATER

Life Enrichment Assistant

My name is Ali Slater, at birchwood Cottages I help decorate the building and play BINGO with the residents. I am a Junior at the Owatonna High School. I am involved in 4-h and show dairy cattle at the county fair. Some things I like to do in my free time are playing with my dogs or going to see the baby calves.

The reason I started working in memory care is because I was referred. At first I was skeptical because I wasn't sure if I'd like it, but after getting to learn who some of these people where I knew I'd love it. My favorite part is hearing about how many of them grew up on a farm just like me.

I like Birchwood because all the residents are very friendly and the staff are very welcoming!



MEET OUR LIFE ENRICHMENT TEAMS!

OWATONNA

KAT BARTZ

Life Enrichment Assistant



My name is Kat Bartz. I work as a life enrichment aid. I am the middle child of 5 children, and look forward to going to the University of MN- Rochester in the fall.

I was looking for work, and a friend of mine was working here in the kitchen. She believed I would do well with this position. Once I started working with these beautiful residents, I fell in love with the job.

I knew of the good reputation it has for not only doing an amazing job at assisted living care, but making every day amazing for everyone here.



Activity Calendars

Available [online here](#) or
click a link below

[North Mankato April Calendar](#)

[Owatonna April Calendar](#)



Smiles, Happiness & Joy



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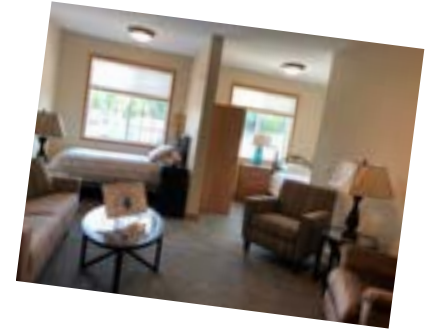
MORE ONLINE

- [Owatonna Leadership](#)
- [North Mankato Leadership](#)
- [Blog Posts](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Photo Gallery](#)

Visit

BirchwoodCottagesMN.com

Experience the Birchwood Difference Stop by for a Tour!



Community Highlights

State-of-the-art camera and alarm technologies

Homestyle living areas with community kitchens

Private and companion room options

24/7 on-site dementia trained caregivers

Life enrichment programming

Beautiful gardens and courtyards with walking paths

Come Home to



Birchwood Cottages

People. Purpose. Passion

Our Values

People. The heart of Birchwood Cottages.

Purpose. To provide a higher quality of life for those with memory loss.

Passion. For striving for excellence.