

## THE HISTORY OF

# Elderhaus

Elderhaus was incorporated in May of 1981 in Wilmington, NC, as a non-profit, 501(c)3 corporation to offer an alternative to premature or unnecessary institutionalization of frail, elderly residents of New Hanover county. Elderhaus's 10-member Board of Directors was comprised of community members who saw the needs of people who were providing constant care in the home rather than placing their loved ones in a nursing home. Business people, clerics, a social worker, and a nurse joined founder Linda Pearce in governing the operations of the organization.



*Founder Linda Pearce*

Elderhaus opened its doors on October 13 at St. James Episcopal Church at 3rd & Market with four clients attending two days a week. It quickly expanded as a full-time service. After a few months, the program was certified by the Department of Social Services as a Medicaid benefit, allowing people who could not pay the \$13/day fee to attend, along with private-pay participants.

After two years at St. James Church, the program moved to St. Paul's Episcopal Church on 16th & Princess, first in the Fellowship Hall and later in the manse. It remained there for 15 years. In 1986, Elderhaus added adult day health to its program after soliciting the lease of city property in the Greenfield Lake area. At that site, Elderhaus offered a combination of adult day care and adult day health.

Thanks to an opportunity offered by a Board member, the Princess Street program moved to South Square Plaza on Carolina Beach Road. The organization then sponsored a capital campaign with Mark Alper, another board member, serving as campaign chair. After raising funds and with the help of a construction loan, Elderhaus renovated and expanded the Greenfield Lake site. In July of 1998, the organization combined all programs under one roof at 1950 Amphitheater Drive.

In 2004, after the introduction of a bill in the General Assembly by Rep. Thomas E. Wright to finance the opening of two PACE sites – one in the eastern part of the state and one in the west – Elderhaus opened the first PACE site in the state. This Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly opened its doors in April of 2008 and became the main funding vehicle for Elderhaus, providing a measure of financial stability for the organization. (It was housed on South 17th Street, across the street from New Hanover Regional Medical Center.) As a PACE program, Elderhaus changed the health care delivery system for participants who lived in New Hanover

and Brunswick counties. As of April 2016, the organization had a staff of 106 employees and served 175 participants in its three programs: PACE, adult day care, and adult day health.

In 2018, Elderhaus purchased 6.2 acres at 1380 College Road in Wilmington, NC, for a new PACE center that began construction in January and February of 2020.

As of September 2019, Elderhaus PACE had 132 enrolled participants while Elderhaus at the Lake had 80 enrolled participants for adult day care and day health. Elderhaus Home Care, as a supportive arm for Elderhaus PACE, provided services for about 40 participants.

The Board of Directors continues to attract engaged local residents who volunteer their time to improve quality of life for participants and who honor and believe in Elderhaus's vision for exceptional senior care.