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## Mustang Creek Estates of Sachse Memory Care Residents prove the importance of friendships in all stages of life

staff report Feb 27, 2018



Vondaine and Shirley

Everyone sometimes wonders what they would do without their friends and they remember what brought them together. Many people think of their friends as a second family. Studies show that friendships have even more benefits as people get older because they positively impact overall physical and emotional well-being, including for seniors living with Alzheimer's.

Vondaine St. Marie, 79, and Shirley Remo, 69, were both diagnosed with this progressive disease five years ago. St. Marie, a native Texan who always lived a busy life, was a professional ballroom dancer and owner of a dance studio. Remo, originally from Louisiana, is a mother of

five children and worked as a school teacher. Their paths crossed once they moved to Mustang Creek Estates of Sachse and enjoyed lunch together one day. From that day forward, they have been inseparable friends. They eat every meal together, participate in activities and just relax together. What's even more important, they encourage one another when one is not having a good day. Their families and the senior living community team members say they are like sisters whose caring relationship inspires everyone they meet.

"Many people might not realize how loving the environment is in our memory care homes, and Shirley and Vondaine are the perfect example of seniors thriving in our care," said Stephanie Upton, sales coordinator at Mustang Creek Estates of Sachse. "They support each other and help each other get through every day, no matter if it is a good or a bad day. When caring for somebody with Alzheimer's, we never know what each day will bring. There is one thing we know for certain: Shirley and Vondaine will be there cheering each other on."

Those who know St. Marie know that she always loved to dress well, with her hair neatly coiffed and her makeup immaculate. It wasn't until five years ago that her friends and family started noticing changes in her appearance, as well as her ability to pay bills on time and to remember otherwise familiar places. Fearing the worst, Donna Colon, St. Marie's sister, made a doctor's appointment for her older sister. The diagnosis was hard for everyone around her to accept. Recently, St. Marie had to have nose surgery due to skin cancer. She was very self-conscious about her appearance and didn't want to come out of her room, but Remo was by her side throughout the recovery process, reminding her of her beauty and the strength of their friendship.

"My sister always liked to oversee everything, and she always stayed busy. When she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, it was very hard for her to accept," said Colon. "She has always been a giving and friendly person. She helped my mother raise me and our three brothers, she owned a dance studio and pie shop and worked hard her whole life. It is very important for me to know that she is not alone at the community because she has a companion. Every time I come to visit her, I am so pleased to see her with a smile on her face next to Shirley. They truly share something special."

Remo, a mother of five children, has never been a big talker, but she is always friendly with everyone around her. She spent her life teaching fourth and sixth grade and was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in her early 60s after her family noticed her challenges remembering things. Remo's family believe her friendship with St. Marie is one of the most important parts of her

everyday life. When the evening comes and they go to their own rooms, Remo and St. Marie get upset because they don't want to leave each other's side. They are each other's shadow in every good way possible.

"I think this friendship is one of the few things that helps my mom remain positive," said Sharon Poole, Remo's daughter. "Anytime she is around Vondaine she is relaxed, and I am so happy they have each other. We all need somebody close to us, and I am pleased to know my mom has somebody down the hall who cares about her. My sisters and I just want the best care possible for our mother, and I know she is receiving it at Mustang Creek Estates of Sachse."

For seniors suffering from memory loss, it is important to be engaged through different activities and social interactions. Studies show that stimulating activities and socialization are significant for maintaining and improving cognitive functions. Mustang Creek Estates of Sachse ensures its residents stay active physically and mentally. The senior living community puts a large emphasis on preserving dignity and providing loving care for residents across all level of care.