



A rendering of the Whisper Woods assisted living facility under construction on Route 25A in Smithtown.

Accepting deposits for new Whisper Woods assisted living facility

By DAVID AMBRO

With its soon-to-open facility in Smithtown, Benchmark Senior Living, of Waltham, Massachusetts, is making its first foray into the New York housing market.

Benchmark, a 21-year-old company, currently operates 58 housing facilities in seven states. Whisper Woods at Smithtown, a \$25 million 101-apartment, 136-bed assisted living facility under construction

across Route 25A from the entrance to St. Catherine of Siena Medical Center, is scheduled to open sometime this spring. It will be Benchmark's first senior living facility in New York.

During a meeting at the site Friday, January 19, Whisper Woods Executive Director Desiree Krajnyak-Baker said the construction is on schedule for a springtime opening, and that Benchmark has begun marketing the newest of its facilities.

Benchmark broke ground on the

Smithtown project in November 2016. The building is designed by Moseley Architects of Richmond, Virginia, and the general contractor on the project is E.W. Howell of Plainview. Most of the exterior work is done and work crews are now completing the interior work, Ms. Krajnyak-Baker said.

The building, located at 71 St. Johnland Road (Route 25A), Smithtown, is a three-story H-shaped structure on a 12.6-acre site. It will house a 30-unit Harbor Program with

38 beds for dementia and Alzheimer's residents on the ground floor. There are 71 units on the second and third floors, some of them companion suites with two studio apartments in them, for a total of 98 beds for senior assisted living.

Ms. Krajnyak-Baker said this week that every Benchmark facility is unique—"we don't have a cookie-cutter model," she said—and that each of the rooms within the Whisper
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Local women in Manhattan for march

By DAVID AMBRO

"There comes a time when silence is betrayal."

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Linda Henninger, of Kings Park, said during an interview this week that is one of her favorite quotes and it is the reason why she was among the 200,000 people to participate in the Women's March in Manhattan Saturday, January 20.

"Why did I march? Because I believe in showing up and in speaking up in peaceful protest," Ms. Henninger said.

The Women's March mustered on the upper west side of Manhattan at Central Park West and 86th Street and made its way through Columbus Circle, passed the Trump International Hotel, and then down to Broadway and 43rd Street. Ms. Henninger marched with a poster that said "The Emperor Has No Clothes," next to which was a caricature of President Donald Trump strutting along naked with a crown on his head.

Ms. Henninger said that

like her, many of the people she spoke to at the march had also attended the inaugural Women's March a year ago. "That says something. The energy of the Women's March has been sustained this past year, and it will continue," she said. "This year the emphasis is on getting more women to the polls, women into office and women's voices heard."

"All these marches around the country reveal the strength of women and men of all color, age and socioeconomic status to stand up and say, 'this isn't the direction we want America to go.' There were teenagers behind me, women in their 80s in front of me, all with a similar message—America must stand for equality for everyone," Ms. Henninger said. "America is held together with millions of individual and unique threads intertwined together. These threads are made up of all races, sexual orientations, religions and color. If we allow our government to start pulling at them, our democracy will surely unravel."

"If it matters, no one's perfect, especially me, but I

think intolerance is surely one thing we should try hard not to tolerate," Ms. Henninger said. "I am proud to be part of this movement."

Also marching Saturday was Amy Fortunato, of Smithtown, a 2017 Democratic candidate for the Smithtown Town Board. She marched with her daughter, Victoria Conklin, and her friend Brannon Burke. Ms. Fortunato said she is a woman of the ministry, so she tried to focus on the positive. She said though that a great many women march with signs against the president, and when they march through Columbus Circle and passed the Trump International Hotel, many of them held up their middle finger. She said, too, that there was a lot of anti-Trump chanting.

"For me it is always about women's issues and women's rights and the president and the words he uses when he talks about women are what inspired me to go," Ms. Fortunato said.

While she marched, Ms. Fortunato said she saw a
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FOR THE CAUSE: Victoria Conklin (left), of Smithtown, the daughter of 2017 Smithtown Democratic council candidate Amy Fortunato, and her friend Brannon Burke (right) at the Women's March in Manhattan Saturday, January 20.

Benchmark moves into NY market with Whisper Woods

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Woods facility is also unique. Providing a floor-by-floor overview of the facility, Ms. Krajnyak-Baker pointed out that Whisper Woods features a state-of-the-art wellness area with a fitness room for physical therapy and occupational therapy; a family room with a full kitchen and dining room for residents to entertain their family or guests; and a roof-top terrace that features a wine bar; a multi-purpose room; a computer room with a library; an arts and crafts room; and a salon for manicures and pedicures and a barber. The facility will also feature a hotel-like lobby with a fireplace and living room areas and there will be an outdoor garden with a walking path.

"They can make it like the den in their own home," Ms. Krajnyak-Baker said. "Just because you're a senior citizen doesn't mean you have to stop living your life."

According to Ms. Krajnyak-Baker, in addition to traditional assisted living and memory impaired programs, Whisper Woods will feature an enhanced license that will allow residents to age in

place without ever having to move out of the community. In addition to around-the-clock care from a team of 85 employees, the facility will also feature a schedule of special events and outings for residents to remain engaged at the facility and in the community.

"We can meet a lot of wants for people coming in," Ms. Krajnyak-Baker said. "The community is going to be beautiful without a doubt, but it is the people inside who make it a home."

Ms. Krajnyak-Baker said the staff will include nurses and technicians and a wide variety of caregivers, chefs, housekeeping personnel and administrative personnel. "So we are providing some good economic growth here in Smithtown," she said.

"It's all about the people and the team and the team I have been building is all about experience in the industry," Ms. Krajnyak-Baker said. "The staff that we are putting together has tons of experience in the field. We are all committed to this industry and the team I am bringing on have a wealth of knowledge and experience."



The finishing touches are being put on the Whisper Woods on Route 25A in Smithtown.

There is currently a welcome center on the site with an office with exterior and interior renderings where they are taking deposits for rooms at a founders discount which is being offered until the facility opens. Whisper Woods has already received about 30 deposits, Ms. Krajnyak-Baker disclosed. She said the plan is to open models of the various room types inside the

buildings starting February 1, which is expected to increase interest. She said there is a need for this type of housing in the area, so Benchmark is confident the facility will fill up by the time it is ready to open.

"We are proud to be a part of the Smithtown community," Ms. Krajnyak-Baker said. "Once the models open, we expect to get a huge push in

deposits."

Ms. Krajnyak-Baker said rooms at Whisper Woods are competitively priced with other surrounding assisted living facilities. The deposit for a room is \$1,000.

For information, Whisper Woods at Smithtown can be contacted at 631-320-5496 or WhisperWoodsSmithtown.com.

Grand Opening



KARISMA



Suzanne, Jess, Jill, Dawn & Nicole (Sam & Ivonne are not shown)

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