



# LET LOVE LIGHT THE WAY

AT THE KENSINGTON SIERRA MADRE



## LOVE & WARMTH IN EVERY MOMENT: A WINTER MESSAGE FROM CC

For all of us, one of the things that we hope will never happen is to have to evacuate our homes in the face of a natural or man-made disaster. Our community lived through this in January during the devastating fires. Our promise “to love and care for your family as we do our own” was never more evident. In wasam so proud and thankful for our team. We would not be together – healthy and safe – were it not for the dedication, courage, and love our team has shown to our residents and each other. Many did this while their own homes and families were also at considerable risk.

Our purpose was to be present. Nature is unpredictable. But our team’s hearts were steadfast, certain and trustworthy. Community recovery is now our focus. Contribution to the wellness of others helps us heal. And we are ready to build. *“Good exercise for the heart is to bend down and help another person up”* – anonymous.

As a community, this season, we look forward to helping our city heal and help in the rehabilitation and revival of our neighborhoods. Join us by helping someone in need – an individual, an organization, a cause. May this year be one for us to lift others up and be grateful for our blessings. *“When you least expect it, peace will softly come into your heart”* anonymous. I felt this peace when the birds returned to our city and their singing once again spread through the morning calm.

With heartfelt gratitude,

CC DeGraff  
Executive Director

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# MEET THE KELLEHER FAMILY



## MEET DIANE, OUR RESIDENT



“My name is Diane Kelleher and I am a resident in the Haven neighborhood at The Kensington Sierra Madre. I was born near Newark, NJ, and spent the first part of my life in the surrounding communities. There, I married my sweetheart “Big John” Kelleher. I had my first three children: Debbie, Kelly, and Kim. I grew up of Italian and Irish heritage. My favorite memories are family meals and all the cooking and preparation: making ravioli with my mother, slow cooking Sunday gravy with my Aunt Tessie, and keeping up with all my cousins.

We relocated to California in the 1960s and started a family business. Our fourth child, John, came to us as a later life surprise. I have always enjoyed music and I love to dance. My favorite thing about The Kensington is the daily live music, and how someone else always wants to dance, too! My family feels so welcome. We have meals often in the private dining room. I have a younger grandson, Jake, who always gets treats and popcorn. All the residents (not just me!) love seeing him.”

## GRATITUDE FROM HER SON, JOHN

Our experience with The Kensington has been fantastic. Leading up to the decision to move mom, we felt so much stress and confusion regarding our options.

***As soon as we saw The Kensington and met the staff, it just felt right. When you know, you know.***

Mom is always impeccably cleaned and dressed. She used to get a hair blowout 3 times a week, and we are happy to say the staff treats her appearance with so much pride. The meal program at The Kensington also stood out to us. The food is great and we no longer have to worry about mom’s nutrition and variety in her diet.

***We always feel welcome. We visit often and everyone is eager to have us join in activities, meals, or special events.***

Lastly, during the recent devastating Eaton Canyon fires, Kensington staff treated our mom with respect and her safety was the highest priority. Kensington communicated every step of the way, and got my mom to safety in such an orderly and systematic manner. There’s no price you can put on that.

***We have no doubt, even in the most extreme circumstances: mom is safe at The Kensington.***



Scan the QR code and take a few minutes to share your experience with us on Google Reviews.





# UPCOMING EVENTS



## JOIN OUR COMPLIMENTARY KENSINGTON CAREGIVER EVENTS

This winter and early spring season, join us for heartfelt professional & insightful educational events that give you the resources you need as a caregiver or family member of an aging loved one.

**Wednesday, February 19th, 3pm - 4pm PDT**

**Keeping Your Mind Sharp: Boosting Your Brain Health**

With Experts on the BCAT Approach & ENRICH Brain Health Program

**Wednesday, March 5th, 3pm - 4pm via Zoom**

**Caring for Solo Agers: Building Your Support System for Successful Aging**

With Steve Gurney, Founder of the Positive Aging Community

**Thursday, March 20th, 3pm - 5pm Onsite**

**Spring Celebration & Anniversary Open House**

Join us in celebrating the 10th Anniversary of The Kensington Sierra Madre

**For more information about our events and to RSVP visit:**  
<https://thekensingtonsierramadre.com/kensington-events/>

## COMING SOON: OUR NEWEST KENSINGTON COMMUNITY *Discover The Kensington Bethesda in Maryland*



**THE KENSINGTON**  
*Assisted Living & Memory Care*  
BETHESDA

Exciting news from our Kensington family! Our newest community, The Kensington Bethesda, is set to open in Summer 2025, offering exceptional assisted living, couples care, and three specialized levels of memory care. **We are excited to share that our model rooms will be open for tours later this month!** As we celebrate the season of love and togetherness, we look forward to sharing more warmth and joy with you. Keep an eye out for details about our Welcome & Information Center that opened last Fall.

Don't miss our latest community updates, exciting news, and exclusive insights into our grand opening. **We invite you to follow us on Facebook at @TheKensingtonBethesda.** Stay connected and be the first to discover all that The Kensington Bethesda has to offer!



# WINTER CAREGIVER GUIDE



## THE 21-SECOND PAUSE: A POWERFUL WAY TO SHOW LOVE

*By Leandra Sims, Kensington Community PAC Expert & Life Enrichment Specialist*

Understanding language change is essential in all forms of communication, especially when expressing love to someone living with brain change. **One of the most profound ways to show love to someone living with dementia is through patience, allowing space for connection to unfold in its own time.**

Right now, take a moment and pause for 21 seconds. Set a timer or listen to the steady tick of a clock. It may feel like an eternity, but for someone living with dementia, this is the time they often need to process what was said. After this pause, you may notice a shift—perhaps a flicker of recognition, a gentle smile, a twinkle in their eyes, or even the words you were hoping to hear.

This simple act of waiting, of holding space without rushing, is a gift of love. It tells them, I see you. I am here with you. You are not alone. **The power of the 21-second pause is the power to communicate love in a way that truly reaches them.** Whether through a warm touch, a familiar melody, or simply being present in the silence, love is not measured in words but in the patience and presence we offer.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCEPTANCE & SELF-LOVE

*Caregiver Support Stories with Susie Sarkisian, Family Support Coach*



“Looking back over the last year, what is one lesson you’ve learned about yourself as a caregiver?” In the January support groups for family caregivers, I’ve been asking this question. It has allowed people to reflect on the year and given them a platform to share the lessons learned.

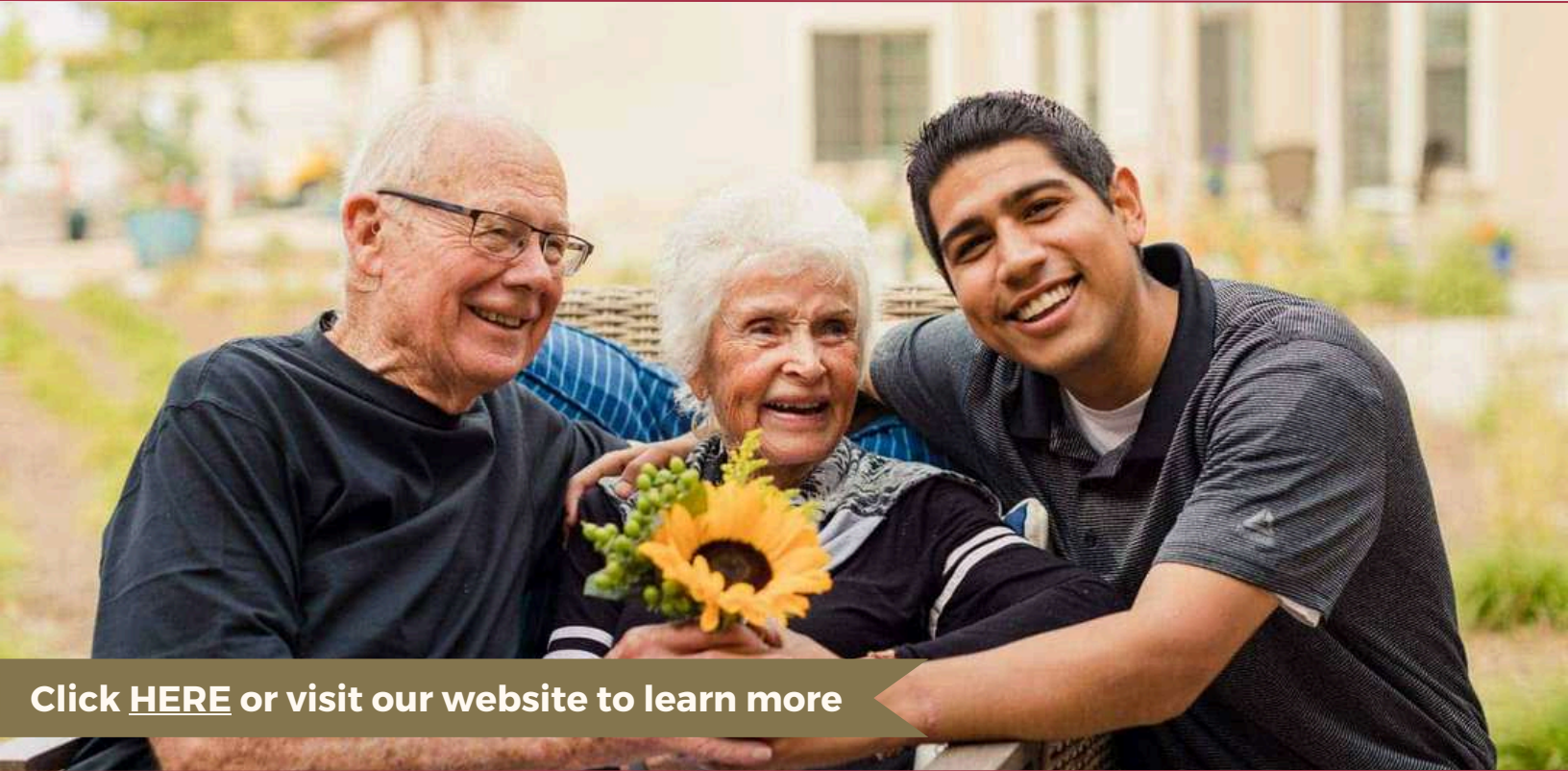
\*Tip: a great way to reflect on your year is to look at photos in your phone from the past year. It jogs memories and brings perspective.

The lessons learned have been in the category of letting go. Letting go of a need to control, of anger at a disease, of disappointment in others, of a need for perfection, letting go of guilt. And with this, is more room for acceptance. Acceptance of the disease, of the situation, of their own limits. The bonus here? Acceptance can bring calm, some peace, and self-care. What could you let go of? And what would be the gift for yourself in letting go?

**Susie Sarkisian is a Certified Life Coach and facilitates support for caregivers. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about her caregiver coaching services.**



# FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP



Click [HERE](#) or visit our website to learn more

## MONTHLY FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Led By *Elizabeth Nadeau, MSG, of CAPS Pasadena*

*Second Tuesday of Every Month  
from 5:30pm to 7pm at The Kensington*

**At The Kensington, YOU, as a caregiver, matter to us as much as our residents do.** We understand that caregiving for someone can, at times, be a demanding commitment. We also believe it is one you should not undertake alone. That's why we strive to preserve your well-being by helping you stay positive, manage fatigue and make the most of time spent with your loved one. Let The Kensington be your trusted resource for information and the comforting ally you need.

Please join us in-person on the 2nd Tuesday of every month with our facilitator Elizabeth Nadeau, MSG. Share time connecting with other caregivers and discussing common challenges in a welcoming, private setting.

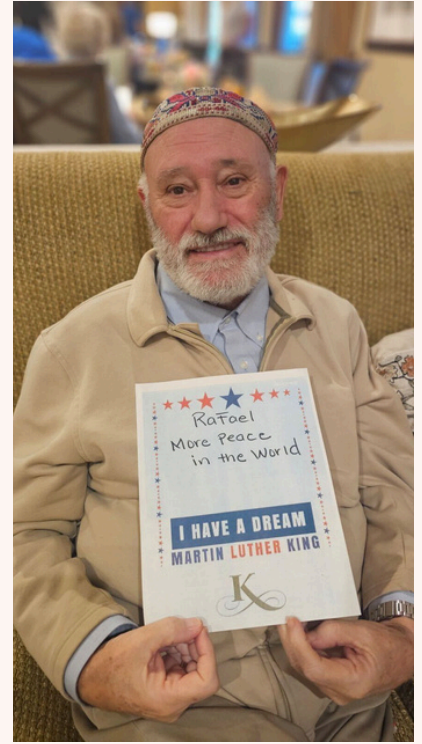
*\*This group is complimentary & open to all, whether your loved one lives at The Kensington, at home, or in another community.*



# COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS



## SPREADING JOY & HAPPY SMILES!



The Kensington has been buzzing with love and exciting happenings! Our assisted living community had a wonderful time celebrating the holidays and welcoming the new year. One of the highlights was the special visit from the Rose Court, where we had the pleasure of meeting Queen Naomi Stillitano and her court. The festive spirit continued with a fun-filled Gingerbread Family Night. A few of our residents also enjoyed a heartwarming Hanukkah dinner, adding to the season's joy. As we rang in the New Year, the sense of community and togetherness was truly special, reminding us of the deep connections that make The Kensington feel like home.

Looking ahead, we're excited for the upcoming spring season, with plans for our 2nd annual fashion show and the celebration of Mardi Gras. As Valentine's Day approaches, we can't wait to express our love for our residents through a beautiful dinner and a special visit from the Sierra Madre Police and Fire Departments. Our community thrives on moments of joy, connection, and celebration, and we look forward to embracing every opportunity to make our residents feel cherished. We're filled with anticipation for what's to come and the moments we will create together in the months ahead.

## EMBRACING WARMTH & TOGETHERNESS...

**Valentines Day Celebration:** February 14th

**Saint Patrick's Day Party:** March 17th

**Annual Resident Fashion Show:** February 27th

**Happy Easter Celebration:** April 20th

**Mardi Gras Happy Hour:** March 4th

**Sock Hop Theme Day:** April 24th



# TEAM MEMBER CORNER



## MEET CYNTHIA STERLING *Lead Concierge*

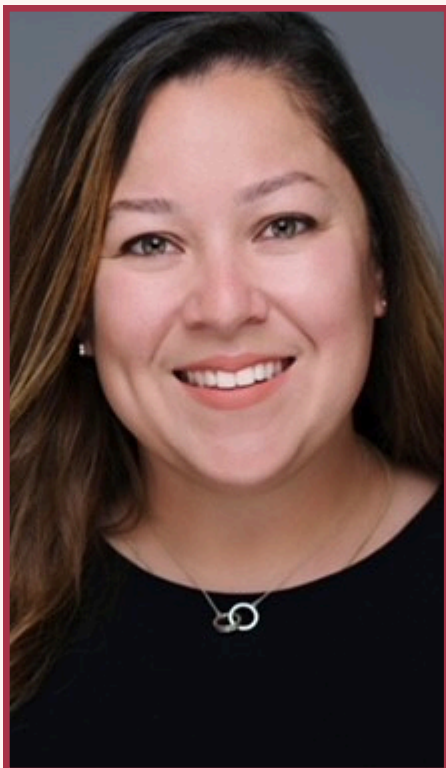
Cynthia Sterling is the welcoming face that greets everyone who walks through the doors of The Kensington Sierra Madre. As Lead Concierge, she embraces the motto, “Welcoming With A Smile.” Cynthia understands the importance of being the first point of contact for visitors and families, and she strives to create a warm and supportive experience for everyone who visits the community.

Cynthia also takes pride in fostering a positive and uplifting environment. Every morning, she makes it a priority to spread positivity to the staff, residents, and families she encounters, creating a sense of connection and care that resonates throughout the community. When asked about her role, Cynthia shares, “It is truly a joy working here at The Kensington.” Her genuine enthusiasm and dedication to her work have made her an invaluable member of the team.



## A HEART FOR CARE AND COMPASSION

### *Celebrating April Vargas’s Journey of Leadership and Love*



We are thrilled to announce April Vargas’s promotion to Executive Director in Training! April has been an integral part of The Kensington family, bringing passion, dedication, and innovation to our community. She first joined us as the Memory Care Activities Coordinator, later transitioning to Coordinator for The Kensington Club. Her leadership and commitment to excellence led her to become Haven Memory Care Manager, where she has continued to enhance the lives of our residents through meaningful care.

She leads by example, inspiring our team members to uphold The Kensington Promise—to love and care for our residents as we do our own family. At The Kensington, we go beyond traditional care, creating a warm, loving environment where residents feel safe, valued, and truly at home. April’s leadership exemplifies our unwavering commitment to excellence, compassion, and personalized care. As she steps into her new role as Executive Director in Training, we know she will continue to make a profound impact, ensuring that every resident and team member experiences the love, respect, and exceptional care care that define our community. We are incredibly proud of April and look forward to seeing her leadership flourish in this new chapter!



**THE KENSINGTON**

*An Assisted Living Residence*

SIERRA MADRE

*Our promise is to love and care  
for your family as we do our own*

**Love for Seniors • Respect for Each Other  
Passion for Excellence • Spirit to Serve**



**Bringing Hearts Together this Winter  
Follow Us On Instagram:  
@KensingtonSeniorLiving**



**Don't Miss A Beat!  
Follow Us On Facebook:  
@TheKensingtonSierraMadre**



**Join Our Caregiver Club for Mobile Updates!  
Text KENSINGTONSIERRAMADRE  
to (571) 489-7385**

**OUR TEAM**

Cecilia "CC" DeGraff  
*Executive Director*

April Vargas  
*Executive Director in Training*

Deseree Suyat  
*Director of Nursing Services*

Marjorie Villarosa  
*Director of Assisted Living*

Danielle Johansen  
*Haven Memory Care Manager*

Dee Dee Zapata  
*Assisted Living Life Enrichment  
Coordinator*

Bianca De La Torre  
*Kensington Club Coordinator*

Melissa Romero  
*Connections Life Enrichment  
Coordinator*

Eric Romulo  
*Haven Life Enrichment  
Coordinator*

Jodie Kendall  
*Director of Community  
Relations*

Hector De Paz  
*Business Office Manager*

Cris Quesada  
*Director of Team Services*

Dusko Novakovic  
*Director of Dining Services*

Jose Fierro  
*Director of Environmental Services*

Teresa Chaure  
*Move-In Coordinator*

**THE KENSINGTON  
SIERRA MADRE**

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