



YEARS OF

CareMalta



*...it's a way
of life*



COMPASSION • ENGAGEMENT • PROFESSIONALISM

CareMalta's Service Excellence Programme



T: 2258 4200 | E: info@caremalta.com

www.caremalta.com

Contents

- 4 Speaking one language: *I Care* – NATALIE BRIFFA FARRUGIA
-
- 6 Care is the ultimate hospitality – CARL CARUANA
'A smile is my reward' – JOSIANN SAMMUT
-
- 8 Ageing differently – CLAIRE CAMILLERI
Maintaining the operation – MICHAEL ZERAFA
-
- 9 Happiness is... forgetting what your argued about – CARMELINA SULTANA
-
- 10 'A job filled with many emotions' – FIONA MUSCAT
-
- 11 Talent begins at home – DANIELA FARRUGIA
'I've seen this place change' – DOREEN MIFSUD
-
- 12 Passing on the *I Care* Concept – ELEONOR SAMMUT DEMANUELE
Stepping into their shoes – SANDRA CALAFATO
-
- 13 'My second family' – LUCY CAMILLERI
-
- 14 Standard bearers of care through the years
-
- 16 'Big smile is important' – GLENDA BUSUTTIL RISIOTT
'The company helped me grow' – RYAN CANSON
-
- 17 'I treat them like my own' – YOLANDA GRIXTI
-
- 18 Food after Mass is residents' daily highlight – JOHN SCIBERRAS
'We're like one big family' – CARMEN BONELLO
-
- 19 Residents' contentment is the 'best payment' – NATASHA CAMENZULI AND MIRIAM PADOVANI
-
- 20 'My job found me' – SIMONE BORG
The vet who became a football coach – VICTOR SCERRI
-
- 21 'Chase your dreams' – JOSEPH BILOCCA
-
- 22 A spoonful of care goes a long way – RACHELLE CAMILLERI
Minding one's business recipe for peaceful longevity – REBECCA VELLA
-
- 23 Paving the way for others – SHIRLEY FENECH AND ANTOINE BORG
-
- 24 Events



Speaking one language: *I Care*

NATALIE BRIFFA FARRUGIA

CAREMALTA CEO

Welcome to this special magazine edition to celebrate the 25th anniversary of CareMalta, which was born from my father's vision to set up the first private residential home for the elderly in Malta.

Nazzareno Vassallo officially opened Casa Arkati on August 1, 1993, in the knowledge that he risked great financial loss because he was trying to penetrate and change long-established social patterns.

Though initially slow to take off, this model of care is a testament to my father's business acumen and foresight, and we have continued to build on this in our nine care homes by investing heavily to pioneer new initiatives.

My father wanted a private company with a public conscience; the creation of a social enterprise that didn't exist at the time. This is the vision I'm pursuing for the years ahead by ensuring we live up to our name, above business interests, with the *I Care* concept.

We cannot be in the business of caring without putting care at the top of our agenda. We cannot compromise between care and our financial model and that has been the key to our success.

I want *I Care* to become our common language; a language built on our 25-year experience as leaders in the field of care. This has to be our key to the future — we want to future-proof ourselves in a changing world with a changing set of values.

Going forward we have to immerse ourselves in this vision of one language: compassion, engagement and professionalism.

Today I feel fortunate to be reliving the basic principles that founded Casa Arkati through our latest development in the disability sector through Hila.

Through our first Public Private Partnership with the government in this field, we have had the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives overnight. We are happy to see that both Casa Apap Bologna and Dar Bjorn have become nests of love and care benefitting from all the experience that has been accumulated from CareMalta's long history and experience.

As a Group we are not ones to sit back and rest on our achievements. We are ambitious and passionate to continue being market leaders, and in the coming years will be focusing on providing new care services and specialised care.

Our growth as a company relies on transposing what we've learnt through our years of providing care for the elderly to other spheres.

When I look back at the characteristics that guide us today, I see hardworking people who are dedicated and genuinely care — it is real vocation and it is thanks to our numerous teams and employees that CareMalta has been successful.

This publication is a celebration of all of you; the people who have kept the heart of our vision pumping, told through the stories of 25 employees, residents and relatives who symbolise all of you.

Going forward, my wish is for the language *I Care* to become a way of life for all of us; a way of life we will all benefit from. It's more than just a job.



Casa Arkati



Natalie Briffa Farrugia, CareMalta CEO presenting a memento to Dorothy Inguanez, the only remaining Casa Arkati employee since it opened its doors 25 years ago.

Care is the ultimate hospitality

CARL CARUANA

FACILITY MANAGER, CASA ARKATI

Carl Caruana has not always worked in the care industry; it is, however, a sector he always felt drawn to.

In fact, prior to his experience with CareMalta, Carl had been working in the tourism industry for some 26 years; 15 of which were spent with Island Hotels, which used to form part of the Vassallo Group.

He distinctly recalls, however, that CareMalta had always come across as an interesting prospect and operated in a sector he aspired to join.

Carl originally expressed an interest to join CareMalta back in 1996, when he had first applied for the position of manager.

Having worked in 3-, 4- and 5-star hotels over the years, and covering positions ranging from Night Manager, Front Office Manager and General Manager, Carl always thought that one day he could take charge of a care home.

“Running a care home is the ultimate goal in the hospitality industry, where I get to be responsible for the total care provision and the welfare of each resident. Caring for my residents on a long-term basis is an opportunity unlike any other.”

Even though Carl has only been part of the CareMalta family since 2012, he has already witnessed remarkable

growth in bed supply across the island, not only at Casa Arkati. He notes how the sector has developed rapidly and how Casa Arkati has experienced a number of changes over the past years, the most significant being the addition of 100 beds in 2014.

Carl also confesses how, during his time with CareMalta, he has witnessed an increase in social cases, where relatives seem reluctant to love and care for their elderly relatives at a time when such care is most needed.

“Representing 220 residents and over 150 employees, coming from all walks of life, with different cultures and traditions, is by no means an easy task. Working together as a team, understanding and respecting each other, and our commitment to do better in a dignified manner, are daily necessities.”

On the other hand, Carl notes how rewarding his job can be; how a resident’s smile or an appreciative gesture goes a long way, together with the feedback received.

He also derives great satisfaction when he sees a newly-admitted resident integrating within the home’s community.

CareMalta’s mission and its facilities “contribute to giving a person a purpose in life”.

‘A smile is my reward’

JOSIANN SAMMUT

ASSISTANT FACILITY MANAGER, CASA ARKATI

Josiann Sammut originally wanted to be a police officer. However, she quickly understood her growing need for a more rewarding and satisfying career path. That’s when she decided to become a healthcare professional who would work with special needs individuals, specifically those possessing learning disabilities.

Her academic choices were also determined by a cause close to heart. Josiann explains how her eldest brother has learning difficulties and how she, as well as her family, has persistently tried to help him lead as normal a life as possible.

After finishing school, Josiann spent three years studying and working in the UK healthcare sector – opting to work with children with some form of learning disability. Josiann has now been working in the sector for almost 18 years, having started out as a care assistant, while studying to become a nurse. On obtaining her qualifications, she first worked as a nurse and eventually became assistant facility manager at Casa Arkati.

As rewarding as her career may be, it is not without difficulties. “The main challenge is emotional,” she confesses, especially when a resident passes away. “They become your second family.” She describes other physical and mental challenges faced on a day-to-day basis, such as demanding

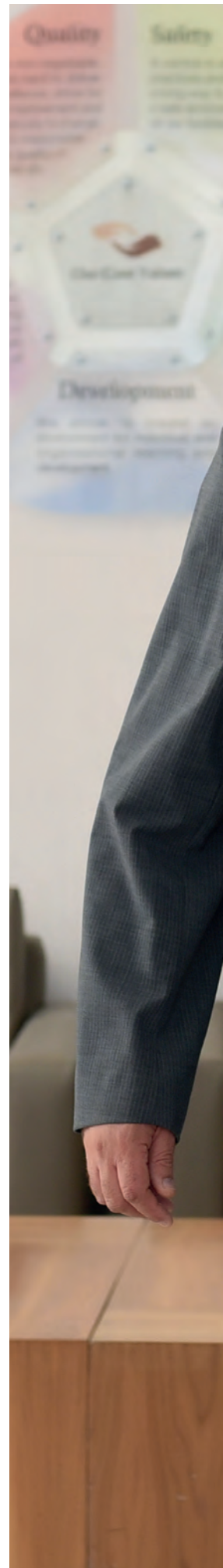
relatives, employees or residents, or trying to educate people to overcome loss or denial. And yet, it all feels worthwhile upon seeing a resident smile and when you realise how comfortable they are in their environment, she explains.

Josiann also finds it immensely satisfying to receive words of thanks from the residents or one of their relatives. “Our approach and service matters greatly, even though healthcare professionals can often be taken for granted.”

The healthcare sector is continuously evolving and changing, she explains, not least Casa Arkati. “As soon as a bed becomes available, it is immediately occupied the next day. This sector is becoming increasingly demanding because of the ageing population and advances in the medical field.”

Josiann shares a few words of encouragement for those thinking of embarking on one of the caring professions: “You have to do your job with love. It has to come from the heart. Always treat residents in the same way you would expect to be treated; think of them as you would your parents, not strangers.”

While struggling to explain the immense job satisfaction she feels, Josiann reiterates how rewarding working in this sector can be. “I believe that doing good makes you feel good and fulfilled.”





Ageing differently

CLAIRE CAMILLERI

ACTIVE AGEING FACILITATOR, ŽEJTUN HOME



Claire kicks off the day with a lot of energy and a pinch of concern over whether the residents will enjoy the activities she has planned for the day. But no matter how she starts it, she usually ends the day with several thank yous.

“That is what I take away with me. Every day I return home knowing that at least one of the 204 residents enjoyed their day. The ‘thank you’ I receive is hugely satisfying.”

Claire started her active ageing role at the beginning of this year, and it was initially quite challenging to introduce interactive activities for the residents, most of whom are fond of tombola.

Initially reluctant to take part in the new activities that Claire was coming up with – whether it was baking or knitting – the number of residents who started to show interest continued to increase... and so did their enthusiasm.

Claire is not new to CareMalta, having started her career with the organisation 13 years ago as a kitchen assistant when her daughter was

just two years old. When she needed to adapt her work routine, she moved to the domestic department, where she spent six years. She eventually joined the laundry team, but when a new opening as Active Ageing Facilitator at the Žejtun Home came up she pounced on it.

She managed to progress in her career while juggling family chores and spending quality time with her daughter.

While her new role is more mentally challenging than her previous ones, she feels she can play a greater role in the well-being of the residents as a front-liner.

In between sharing laughter and sometimes shedding a tear with them, she ensures they are kept occupied throughout the day. Claire always chooses interactive activities that change from day to day, from quizzing them about Maltese proverbs, pushing them to try aerobics or attempt handcrafts.

During these activities they often pick up an engaging conversation with other residents, so they also serve as an opportunity to socialise.

Maintaining the operation

MICHAEL ZERAFA

MAINTENANCE MANAGER, CAREMALTA

It's funny how the people working behind the scenes are hardly ever noticed or spoken about; their work barely detectable.

Michael Zerafa is one such person. Having worked in CareMalta's maintenance section for the past 18 years, he started out as an apprentice back in 1999 after obtaining a diploma to become an advanced technician.

Michael has never been stationed in any one place – he has been mobile, operating between several homes, such as Villa Messina in Rabat, Casa Arkati in Mosta, or the Žejtun Home.

By 2008, Michael became part of CareMalta's management team within the maintenance department, which effectively meant he was also placed at the helm when CareMalta's sixth residence – Dar il-Madonna tal-Mellieħa – was due to open. Michael is currently maintenance manager not only at the Mellieħa home,

but also at Roseville, Casa San Paolo, Zammit Clapp and Dar Bjorn.

Michael explains the challenge of having to divide his time across all the facilities, as well as leading the individual teams within the homes.

Some homes require more attention, which can be tough since his is the smallest department within the company. Having said that, the challenges are decidedly outweighed by the many aspects that both inspire and motivate him.

“I am given the opportunity to help others even by solving small problems, especially those of a technical nature; I help in providing the infrastructure so that all the departments can operate smoothly.

“Serving others, most especially the residents, who are ultimately the main focus of the care industry, is incredibly motivating and they express gratitude for all we do,” Michael says.





Happiness is... forgetting what you argued about

CARMELINA SULTANA, KNOWN AS LINA

RESIDENT, VILLA MESSINA

If you ask Lina, who is 89 going on 16, for advice, she will pass on a warning that she was given by a certain Bernarda: daytime arguments between a husband and wife should be resolved by nightfall.

“When I went to ask my mother what she meant with that, she told me not to speak to that woman again,” Lina says, her eyes twinkling with laughter.

“Are you married?” she asks. Upon receiving a nod, she adds: “Try to keep yourself happy, even if it means letting go of what you were arguing about. Every couple have their ups and downs, and we used to have the occasional argument. But if we are arguing, and someone turns up, I would forget the argument by the time they leave. If my husband was to blame he would be grateful for this, but ultimately, I was happier, and better off that way.”

Her lively, but quiet and humble nature shines through as she recounts decades-worth of memories, including the loveliest times: including her four-year courtship with the man of her life, Joseph.

Before moving to Gzira and eventually Lija, she spent her childhood in Floriana, where the family remained during the war. She recalls spending the day at home and the night in shelters, from where she could clearly hear the island being bombed.

Her late father Anthony was a businessman, which meant that his three daughters did not experience much food scarcity.

Their mum, Josephine, would ensure they did not eat the occasional chocolate bar outdoors, as most of their neighbours’ children were not so lucky.

Lina moved to Villa Messina four years ago after losing her husband, but remains quite independent and takes care of all her grooming. Her day starts and ends with a bath, and in between she ensures she always looks her best.

From a very young age, Lina would dress up nicely, warning her mother not to see her off to school in slippers, which would prompt her mum to tease that she would don her fur coat instead.

Lina, a mother-of-three, grandmother-of-eight and great-grandmother-of-three, keeps to herself most of the time, minding her own business, but she is friendly with anyone who starts up a conversation.

At 89, she is a prime example of active ageing, and she will even swing her hips to the tune if you play some music.

‘A job filled with many emotions’

FIONA MUSCAT

ABA TUTOR, HAND IN HAND LTD

Fiona Muscat has been working with children with special needs for over 23 years.

She originally studied to be a kindergarten educator, due to her love of children, as well as the possibility of being an instrument in their development.

However, since there was no need for kindergarten educators in State schools at the time, she was employed as a learning support educator with children with special needs.

“Initially, it was a challenge as it was not what I expected to be doing, but as time went by I found that I really enjoyed working with children with diverse needs as their achievements gave me joys I could not imagine.”

Fiona is now a registered behaviour technician. She joined the Hand in Hand organisation eight years ago, when it was still in its infancy.

“I have seen it evolve... and I am so proud to belong to this team that is improving the quality of life for so many families who have children on the autism spectrum, by being the pioneers of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) in Malta.”

Fiona has been working with children on the autism spectrum for a long time, yet despite the knowledge gained through her experiences, she felt the need to know more



about the condition; primarily the hows and whys of exhibited behaviours.

So she opted to study for an MA which, she feels, will improve her abilities as a therapist, as well as be an asset should she ever decide to become a Behaviour Analyst.

Attitude and outlook are key when working in this sector; what one would classify as a challenge, Fiona views as an opportunity.

Challenges “feel more like opportunities to learn; through which children can gain new skills and reach their full potential. The hardest part of all this is deciphering each child’s learning method. Thankfully, with support from the Behaviour Analyst, specific programmes are tailor-made to each child, as ABA is not a ‘one size fits all’ therapy.”

“This job is filled with many emotions” she explains, “you have to be ready to have good days and bad days. You need to be quick-thinking, a good team player, firm but friendly, a shoulder for the parents and never be disheartened.

“For some children progress may be slow but when it comes, nothing beats that feeling of pride and satisfaction. Most of all you need to be able to take guidance from your Supervising Behaviour Analyst as this will make you grow and improve in all that you do.”



Talent begins at home

DANIELA FARRUGIA

KITCHEN ASSISTANT, ZAMMIT CLAPP

Daniela Farrugia thoroughly enjoys her job as a kitchen assistant at Zammit Clapp Hospital. She aims to work as hard as she can to earn a lot of money so she can get married and have children – “a hundred of them”, she declares.

The 24-year-old, who has Down's Syndrome, has been employed with CareMalta for the past two years and her tasks include laying out tables, placing garbage bags in the rubbish bins, preparing trolleys, making *ħobż biż-żejt* and other sandwiches, liquidising food and serving it.

“I would like to tell all young people who say they cannot work that they definitely should try. Everyone can learn,” she says earnestly.

Daniela puts her skills to good use around the house as well, helping her parents with domestic chores, such as cooking *minestra* and sweeping the floors.

“We're very happy Daniela has been employed. Her boss takes good care of her and our minds are at rest,” Daniela's mother Connie says.

People with intellectual disabilities, such as Down's Syndrome, have a range of skills, she continues. One just has to identify what they are good at and home in on it.

“They have many hidden capabilities. They just don't know how to push themselves, so need to be given a chance. But whatever she learns, Daniela then does it by the book. She's a big perfectionist.

“They also respond very well to responsibilities – for instance, if I say: ‘make tea...’

“Shall I?” Daniela immediately jumps in as she makes to get up.

“No dear, I'm just giving an example at this moment,” her mother explains gently.

Daniela's enthusiasm is also carried over to the live-ins she attends at Casa Apap Bologna.

“She still insists with helping out the staff in the kitchen,” Ms Farrugia smiles.

“Live-ins are the absolute best,” Daniela adds. “They're very special because we do a lot of fun stuff and, most of all, I get to meet my friends.”



‘I've seen this place change’

DOREEN MIFSUD

HOUSEKEEPER, CASA SAN PAOLO

Doreen Mifsud got her first full-time job at the tender age of 15, working as a domestic at the Bugibba Holiday Complex.

That was 31 years ago. Her role progressed since then, from supervisor, to housekeeping assistant, and for the past 10 years or so, she has been a housekeeper. However, her job, as well as her life, was steered in a very different direction three years ago when she started working at Casa San Paolo – one of the most recent care homes to be opened under CareMalta's brand and umbrella.

“My work and my duties changed drastically”, explains Doreen, “I had to learn to adapt to a new environment, which wasn't easy.”

Having formed part of the team from the beginning – since Casa San Paolo opened its doors – Doreen has come to consider it her

second home. “I've seen this place change, evolve. There are residents here who have been with us since the day we opened – that is to say, the same amount of time I have been here.”

Doreen explains: “This job calls for a person to be very patient, understanding and empathetic; even though I am a housekeeper, not a carer, circumstance often demands that we step out of our role and duties, to give something more.”

Even though Doreen has been working in the care industry for a relatively short period of time, she feels fulfilled, and wouldn't change her job; despite the shift and challenges initially faced, Doreen expresses how the elderly at Casa San Paolo “become a part of your life; one easily grows to love them”.

Passing on the *I Care* Concept

ELEONOR SAMMUT DEMANUELE

FACILITY COORDINATOR, ROSEVILLE

Eleonor has worn several hats at CareMalta starting from a receptionist and moving on to becoming a facility coordinator at Roseville. Apart from administrative tasks, her new role sometimes requires her to go around the facility ensuring everything is running smoothly.

Apart from this, she is also a Facility Administrative Assistant trainer, and has this year trained four colleagues – passing on the skills she acquired throughout the eight years she has been working for CareMalta.

To date, this is one of the most fulfilling roles for Eleonor and despite all these years with the company, the smiles on residents' faces continue to fulfil her.

But it's not all smiles every day and losing a resident is a bitter reality that CareMalta employees have to deal with. At times, it feels as if they themselves have lost a relative, she explains, noting that it was also challenging to help residents' relatives come to terms with the deteriorating condition of elderly family members. The latter is one of the skills Eleonor feels she has acquired from her day-to-day encounters with clients.

Eleonor's day is normally quite busy as she has now also taken on the role of an *I Care* influencer, a concept launched earlier this year by the company. She is one of 90 people from CareMalta's facilities who are being trained to pass on the *I Care* concept, which revolves around providing residents with dignity.

Just like fellow colleagues who advance from one role to another within CareMalta, settling down in a new position is sometimes tough; however, Eleonor is already looking forward to new challenges ahead.



Stepping into their shoes

SANDRA CALAFATO

SUPPORT CARE ASSISTANT, HILA



Everyone has a disability. Some are just more obvious than others, Sandra Calafato believes.

As a support care assistant at HILA's Casa Apap Bologna, Sandra does not see her clients' difficulties. Throughout the two years she has worked at the respite home, she has learnt to step into their shoes – and every day has learnt something new from them.

"They all have their own story. And they have taught me to look at life through a different lens. Their simplicity is impressive."

The 40-year-old made a big leap herself when she made the difficult decision to move into a different role after spending over 20 years as a housekeeper at CareMalta's Żejtun Home.

She now requires an even greater dose of dedication and patience – but the satisfaction she derives from her current role is far greater.

Sandra will never forget an incident she experienced with one particular client, a 21-year-old young woman with whom she spent three days.

"Due to the nature of her disability, she exhibited a high degree of challenging behaviour. But I persisted.

"At the end of her stay, she suddenly turned round and proceeded to hug and kiss me. It was very emotional – her mother started to cry, saying that her daughter had never displayed such affection as she usually shunned contact.

"Being non-verbal and exhibiting difficult behaviour, one might easily think that they're not really taking in and appreciating what you're doing with them. But it all goes to show they really are."



‘My second family’

LUCY CAMILLERI

RESIDENT, COSPICUA HOME

Lucy Camilleri looked as pretty as a painting in a smart blouse, pearl studded earrings and a long beaded necklace – one of her many skilful creations.

“You look very elegant today, Lucy,” one of the Cospicua Home carers commented as he approached us. The 84-year-old proudly replied that she had dressed up because she was being interviewed. While apologising for interrupting, the carer went on to brief Lucy about the home’s next outing.

“Don’t be late or I won’t marry you!” the carer quipped as a playful parting shot. “In that case I’ll just find myself another man,” Lucy laughingly retorted.

The exchange of playful banter is reflective of the warm rapport shared between carers and residents at the home. Lucy waxes lyrical about the “sweet” carers and the way they always stop to lend an ear. They treat her as their mother and, in return, she regards them as her children.

“They are my second family,” she says simply.

Lucy, widowed 10 years ago, has two daughters and four grandchildren of her own and has been living at the Cospicua Home for the past six years.

It was initially difficult to leave her house and move into a residential home for the elderly, Lucy admits. But never one to mope around, she

quickly got used to her new environment. And the upside of it, she explains, is that she doesn’t have to stay at home by herself, ruminating on the possibility of having her house broken into.

The home also makes sure to engage its residents and keep them busy through an eclectic schedule of activities and outings. Lucy involves herself in various crafts activities, having an adept hand at knitting.

“I used to be so good at needlework, beading and ganutell – my hands are now weary,” she says, glancing down at them sadly.

A cursory look around her room, however, reveals this to be a bit of an overstatement. Her bedroom is replete with decorative objects such as jewellery boxes, vases, tissue box covers and a holy cross, all of which she skilfully made using a technique known as plastic canvas. She picked up the craft from the home around a year ago.

Activities are ongoing but Lucy’s favourite periods at the home are Christmas and Easter. Singers animate the home with lively songs and carers and able residents can be found engaging in a spot of dancing.

We are once again interrupted, this time by an elderly resident who slowly shuffles towards Lucy to hand her a slice of toast and an orange.

“She is such a saint – so very sweet. We look out for each other here,” Lucy says with a smile.

Standard bearers of care through the years

Any developer would have easily given in to the profitable temptation to transform a large plot of land in Mosta into apartments, but Nazzareno Vassallo's desire to build something with a social purpose in his cherished hometown won. That was when Casa Arkati was born.

The first private residential home for the elderly in Malta opened its doors on August 1, 1993, a move that provided an innovative model of care through private-public partnerships and set the standard in this sector.



In her role as CareMalta's CEO, Natalie Briffa Farrugia has taken her father's vision to have a private company with a public conscience to another level. She has overseen the company's growth in the areas of disability, with HILA opening two homes and CareMalta's homes expanding to nine.

As the company celebrates its 25th anniversary, Natalie and her team remain focused on being market leaders by transposing the valuable experiences gained over years of providing care for the elderly to that of other spheres.



Private
refurbished –
in Attard

11



Casa Arkati
undergoes
refurbishment

2014



CareMalta diversifies
to the disability sector
with the inception of
HILA Homes. Casa
Apap Bologna is the
first home to be
acquired, followed by
Casa Santa Monica.

2016



The launch of *I Care* –
CareMalta's Service
Excellence Programme

2018

2012
Zammit Clapp
Hospital – starts its
operation under
CareMalta
management



2015
Official inauguration
of another privately
owned home –
Casa San Paolo



2017
Villa Messina
undergoes extensive
refurbishment



2018
Casa Marija, a
privately owned home
for the elderly opens in
Sliema. This is the
ninth home for the
Elderly to be operated
under CareMalta's
management.



‘Big smile is important’

GLENDABUSUTTIL-RISIOTT

LEAD CARE ASSISTANT, COSPICUA HOME



Glenda Busuttill-Risiott first joined CareMalta in 2004 at the tender age of 17 and, despite the challenging demands which are somewhat part and parcel of the care industry, she is in her 14th year and counting.

Now 31, Ms Busuttill-Risiott explains she initially started off working as a carer at the Żejtun Home. Despite being so young at the time, she had immediately felt this was the right job for her.

“My mother used to be a nurse and taught us to be caring. I also love helping out – I used to volunteer at *ir-Razzett tal-Hbiberija*. As I matured, I tried my best to be a leader. But never did I imagine myself holding such a position. I have always been absolutely terrified of studying.”

Ms Busuttill-Risiott is now the lead care assistant at the Cospicua Home. She describes CareMalta as being a very nurturing company, crediting the management and head office with supporting and encouraging her to study, grow and take on larger roles with greater responsibility. Despite being married with a two-year-old daughter, Ms Busuttill-Risiott was empowered and fully supported to overcome her fear of studying and enrol for a diploma in health and social care at Mcast.

Her motto is to lead by example – and to never underestimate the importance of a big smile.

“We work with vulnerable individuals who can easily absorb a negative mood. So it’s very important to keep your spirits buoyed.”

Receiving a grateful ‘thank you’ from the residents, whom she considers to be family, is the driving force which keeps Ms Busuttill-Risiott going day after day.

“A recent moment that will remain etched in my memory is when we took the residents on an outing to Gozo. It was a tiring day for us but so very worth it. Seeing them so happy made my day.

“Watching them squeeze your hand and saying ‘thank you’ gives me such fulfilment – I went home that day feeling like I had won the lottery.”

‘The company helped me grow’

RYAN CANSON

NURSE, ZAMMIT CLAPP

It was quite an adjustment for Ryan Canson when he first arrived in Malta in 2013, looking for a job to support his younger brothers’ education back in the Philippines.

A trained nurse, Ryan was more used to working in a hospital environment since homes for the elderly are uncommon in his home country – the majority of elderly there are cared for by their relatives.

“It was quite difficult at first because I knew absolutely no one and the culture was new to me,” the 29-year-old recalls.

However, he was soon employed by CareMalta and started working at the Żejtun Home, where he felt very welcomed.

Ryan hails the company as one which truly embraces diversity and promotes integration, going on to explain how it frequently organises events that bring together employees from different nations.

“CareMalta is incredibly employee-oriented. They always support their employees, listen to our needs and follow through. The company really helped me grow, both personally as well as professionally.”

Ryan is now a nurse at Zammit Clapp Hospital – a very satisfying profession that entails a lot of hard work but which keeps him motivated and striving to be a better version of himself, he says.

Pressed to identify a memorable moment, he recalls the words of one resident, who had to take insulin twice a day, extolling his “hands of gold”, insisting that he was so gentle that she never once felt the jab.

“I was very flattered. You’re not doing much but it’s always so nice to see them being so appreciative,” he says in tone, which is remarkable in its unfeigned humility.

'I treat them like my own'

YOLANDA GRIXTI

SENIOR CARE ASSISTANT, ZAMMIT CLAPP

Yolanda Grixti decided to enter the care industry five years ago at the age of 46 – an informed decision she took after spending years lovingly caring for her elderly foster parents.

Yolanda, who holds the role of a senior care assistant at the Zammit Clapp Hospital, explains that she was fostered at the age of nine.

Before eventually passing away in 2005, her foster father had battled colon cancer. Yolanda, despite having two young children of her own at the time, dedicated herself to nursing him and even enrolled in a course at Mcast specifically to learn how to care for a patient with that condition.

She then repeated the process with her foster mother five years ago, who at the time was blind and suffering from dementia.

"She had given me so much love – I just wanted to give something back," she says in a choked voice.

Yolanda recalls how she would groom, wash and lift her foster mother.

"I remember wondering: 'How am I managing to do this all by myself?' But somehow I was. She became like my baby and depended on me for all her needs."

Two weeks after her foster mother's death, Yolanda started work as a carer at the Zammit Clapp Hospital.

Day-to-day tasks were never merely perfunctory for Yolanda – she would always make sure to go that extra mile – such as engaging patients in conversation, grooming their hair before taking them out into the corridors and administering treatment using yoghurt, while pretending that it was ice cream to coax them into opening their mouths.

"I genuinely look forward to going to work every morning. My children are now adults so I have a lot of time to myself. When the day



draws to a close, I leave for home feeling good – though must admit that I am prone to then wondering whether I have done everything I was meant to do," she adds with a laugh.

CareMalta has also recognised Yolanda's talent and hard work and named her as an *I Care* influencer, something which gives her great pride. She has also been encouraged and supported to attend courses and move forward in her career.

"I love what I do and I do it with all my heart. I treat every elderly patient as if they were my own beloved mum and dad."



Food after Mass is residents' daily highlight

JOHN SCIBERRAS

HEAD CHEF, VILLA MESSINA

When John was thinking of starting his own family he knew he could no longer work the hours he was clocking in the hospitality industry. And although he was interested in joining CareMalta's kitchen team, he was wary of a challenge he had not yet faced within the catering sector.

"When you work in a hotel, you serve the same tourists for a week, maximum two. In a residential home, your clients will be there for much longer, so the idea of a much more varied menu might be quite daunting."

Nowadays, he has no regrets. On the contrary, the challenge of varying the dishes keeps him on his toes and, after 18 years, he still enjoys discussing meal options with residents.

His tour around the home's dining room is a daily appointment, and he makes sure he speaks to every single resident there. Over time he has learnt each resident's preference, and whenever possible tries to accommodate them.

Diners have a choice of five items for lunch, and another five for dinner, which vary

every day for three weeks. The menu changes every six months, especially with the changing seasons.

"You always have to keep in mind that apart from Mass, food is the highlight of the residents' day. They start queuing for lunch soon after having breakfast."

He started working in the Villa Messina kitchen and eventually moved to a centralised kitchen for all of CareMalta's homes. He is now back to being in charge of Villa Messina's kitchen, a position he loves.

He enjoys working at the home because along the years he has established a camaraderie with fellow staff and residents.

John speaks passionately about food, meals and the state-of-the-art kitchen, which has just been refurbished.

But outside the kitchen, the father-of-two has another passion... has a love for vintage cars, with his prized possession being a Mercedes W123, which was previously owned by his 83-year-old father George.



'We're like one big family'

CARMEN BONELLO

RETIRED NURSE, VILLA MESSINA



After more than two decades with CareMalta, Carmen thought she would find it hard to get used to retired life.

Working as a nurse since 1977, she stopped briefly when she got married to raise her three children, but then returned in 1996 because of family circumstances.

Determined to support her family and ensure that her children could progress, Carmen managed to successfully balance her work-life duties. This was also made possible through the encouraging support of her colleagues and CareMalta staff, who stood by her and her ailing husband.

"My colleagues would fill in whenever I needed to take emergency leave. Apart from being colleagues, we were like one big family, always there for each other. Although I do pop by to visit every now and then, I miss the staff and whenever I'm here I have to curb my urge to help out."

Known for her unrelenting energy, Carmen was "always on the go", but never lost focus of the residents.

Nowadays, apart from taking care of her children and grandchildren, she carries out house visits on a voluntary basis, where her nursing skills come in handy... whether treating wounds, taking note of blood pressure, bathing, or just lending an ear, Carmen's nursing abilities refuse to retire.



Residents' contentment is the 'best payment'

NATASHA CAMENZULI AND MIRIAM PADOVANI

SENIOR CARE ASSISTANTS (DEMENTIA AMBASSADORS – CARE), ROSEVILLE

For residents living on Natasha's floor, the day starts at 7.15am with prayer and instrumental music.

Throughout the day she tries to keep them as active as possible, in a bid to slow down the progression of dementia. They start off with a walk along the corridor, followed by some morning exercises. This allows them to integrate, share a laugh and chat.

Natasha is known for her perseverance with residents who suffer from dementia, as well as for thinking outside the box on how to ensure they retain their dignity. Her efforts include helping residents gain independence when using the bathroom; efforts that have gone down so well that training sessions have actually been included in the daily schedule for some of them.

She knows how fond dementia sufferers are of any classical music that rekindles memories from another world, so she ensures that the environment around them is adapted in this manner.

This can take the form of traditional Maltese music and songs on the radio, old musicals or movies on TV, or the swapping of abstract picture frames with black and white photos of vintage Malta.

From time to time, some of the residents pause in front of these photos and recount particular episodes from their life that occurred at the places featured in the photos. Their memories are also rekindled through sensory experiences, such as an afternoon tea activity that includes traditional Maltese coffee.

Natasha draws her energy from the enthusiasm expressed by residents, who are quite fond of her, and she is always striving to make their daily life a little bit more interesting and stimulating.

Now in her seventh year with CareMalta, the satisfaction and contentment of the residents – aged between 70 and 99 – “is the best payment you could ever get”.

Fellow colleague Miriam also feels she has gained a lot of affection from her clients, which is the best bonus.

“Even if I take them out for a walk and they forget immediately after, what matters is that at that point in time they were enjoying themselves.”

Miriam joined CareMalta in 2005 as a care assistant and moved from one facility to another, taking on different roles that included the position of active ageing facilitator at Prince of Wales, Sliema, until she eventually moved to Roseville.

She too tries to keep residents as active as possible, whether they are recounting memories over a cup of tea, doing some crafts, playing tombola or listening to an audiobook.

Spending the day with dementia sufferers is often tiring and challenging, but the carers always work with other professionals, such as occupational therapists, who together try to make the residents' stay at the home a little better with every passing day.

'My job found me'

SIMONE BORG

LEAD CARE ASSISTANT / I CARE INFLUENCER - CASA ARKATI

While many would say they have chosen their career path, there are others who insist that it was their job which chose them. That is very much the case with the caring professions, and those individuals who refer to their career choices as having been vocational.

Take Simone Borg for instance. On meeting her, one is immediately struck by her radiance and positivity. This is what being fulfilled in one's job and career looks like; this is what starting the day with a smile must feel like.

Simone is an *I Care* Influencer. Forget the social media influencers – those who are there to sell lifestyles and promote products or services which they may not even believe in – this is the kind of influencer who matters; one who actually makes a difference on a daily basis.

A concept which CareMalta introduced a few months back, influencers are trained to show and promote increased compassion towards residents, to be fully engaged with them, and to always act with the utmost professionalism – in every aspect of their work. CareMalta has, so far, selected some 100 influencers across its



homes, and Simone has been tasked with training her colleagues to uphold the *I Care* values.

Simone has been working with CareMalta for some 15 years. She was originally based at

Villa Messina, then moved to Roseville and now forms part of the team at Casa Arkati – where she holds the position of lead carer.

And yet, Simone never thought she would become a carer, as, by her own admission, she was afraid of coming face to face with illness and death.

Having worked in a factory, and subsequently a store, she admits how the 'move' to CareMalta was "one of the best decisions" she has ever taken. She describes her experience as a "lovely journey", and one in which she finds incredible support from the staff and members of her team despite the intense stress levels and the emotional challenges that accompany the job.

She explains how this job made her stronger and more confident – and even when she was passing through personal and emotional turmoil, her job and the sense of camaraderie at her place of work gave her the strength she needed.

"This kind of job comes through vocation; this is not the kind of job you choose just to earn a salary; it is the kind of job you choose and stick to because of the immense satisfaction."

The vet who became a football coach

VICTOR SCERRI

RESIDENT, CASA ARKATI

Often, just by looking at a person, you can easily perceive how full a life they have led.

Victor Scerri might be pushing 90, and may also be wheelchair-bound, but neither aspect seems to have slowed him down. He's chatty and very eager to share his life experiences and take a trip down memory lane.

Victor has quite a background and myriad stories to go with it. Having been a footballer with the Sliema Wanderers for 17 years, he recounts with some pride how he

won numerous football honours and awards, and also how, in the process, ended up breaking a few records – a couple of which still remain intact.

He also trained to become a coach, obtaining his badge in the late 1960s. By 1974, he was already coaching the national team and worked with several clubs over the years, including Sliema Wanderers, with whom he used to play. Victor explains how back then, he was paid Lm300 (€699) per year to coach as many as four teams –

including amateur players, Under-21s, the Youth Team and the National Team.

And yet, football was not always, nor the only, defining factor of Victor's life. Curiously, his full-time job was as a government veterinarian and one of his career milestones was connected with Malta's introduction of artificial insemination for cows.

He talks proudly about the tedious and challenging training he underwent to qualify, and how artificial insemination revolutionised the sector.

‘Chase your dreams’

JOSEPH BILOCCA

RESIDENT, ŽEJTUN HOME

Joseph has survived World War II, the Internet Age and everything in between. He has seen Malta develop over eight decades, but the biggest change he has witnessed has nothing to do with the landscape.

“People’s attitude towards others and their general behaviour has changed completely. Sadly, respect towards each other and towards the authorities has plummeted,” he says, shrugging.

Joseph, 83, recalls the strict discipline at the dockyard, where he was in charge of a group of some 20 fitters and colleagues... they always addressed each other courteously.

Reminiscing about those days, Joseph recalls how he had first enrolled to work at the dockyard at 15 in 1950. He had made it with the first shortlist of 11 applicants and then went on to sit for an exam with some other 1,000 hopefuls.

“Back then, getting a job at the dockyard was a big deal. If your son made it through, it was like seeing them off to law school. I loved all of the 45 years I spent there, and till the very end I was referred to as *l-imghallem*, or boss.”

Discipline was not limited to the dockyard, and even when he started courting his late wife, Tessie, his mother-in-law gave him just three days to make up his mind.

Joseph, from Marsa, has fond memories of his time at the dockyard, but sadly, does not



often find someone to recall the ‘good old times’ with. Instead, he spends his free time teasing fellow residents, sharing a joke with the staff, or hanging out with some friends in Marsaxlokk.

Otherwise, if there is anyone willing to spare five minutes and keep him company, they can hear all about the war, and that one instance when he was just five years old and a bomb was dropped close to the entrance of the shelter that

he was in. Those taking refuge there had to be pulled out through the rubble blocking the entrance.

Joseph was also an avid table tennis player, and having been personally trained by Fredu Sciberras, the national champion at the time, he had the edge over his competitors.

But what about his secret to longevity? “Chase your dreams whenever possible.”



A spoonful of care goes a long way

RACHELLE CAMILLERI

KITCHEN ASSISTANT, DAR IL-MADONNA TAL-MELLIEHA

Rachelle never thought she would one day become an assistant chef when she joined CareMalta nearly seven years ago.

“I will always remember the day I started: it was August 2, 2011. I have enjoyed my time working here so much, that the date remained imprinted in my head,” she says in between errands for her wedding.

Rachelle had tried her hand at different workplaces, including a chemist’s assistant and a salesperson, but she has never felt as satisfied as in her current role with CareMalta.

She started off as kitchen assistant, and her tasks included setting up the dining room tables and helping out at the pantry. These days, she stands alongside the chef, filling in whenever they are absent.

Apart from the welcoming environment at the home, the highlight of her shift is meeting residents during meal times. The affection is mutual and it often seals the day for her.

Rachelle draws satisfaction from presenting a nice dish to clients, providing a



taste of home away from home. One of the ingredients that is always added to their meal is a spoonful of care which does not go unnoticed.

Meanwhile, in the kitchen she is always learning something new. Advancing in her role

has also helped her break out of her shell and believe more in herself. Although initially daunting, she definitely does not regret advancing in her career, and looks forward to taking up new opportunities within the company.

Minding one’s business recipe for peaceful longevity

REBECCA VELLA

RESIDENT, DAR IL-MADONNA TAL-MELLIEHA



Respect others, be patient with each other, mind your own business and avoid disputes. This is Rebecca’s recipe for peaceful longevity.

The 91-year-old was one of the first residents at the Mellieha home, and over the past eight years has seen several fellow residents step into the home for the very first time.

Known as a “quiet and respectful” resident, Rebecca likes to keep herself to herself, and when she is not taking part in one of the social activities organised by the dedicated staff, she is watching TV. She also tries to get off her chair to take a short walk around the home, and finds it comforting to speak to carers when her children are not around to keep her company.

Originally from Valletta, Rebecca especially looks forward to visiting the capital during the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (*Tal-Karmnu*), where she gets the chance to meet her surviving siblings who are in their 80s.

Mellieha, she admits, is a bit far from her hometown, but it reminds her of her late husband Carmelo, who is from the seaside village. Although she can no longer go swimming, something she was fond of doing when she was young, she can at least take a peek at the sea every now and again.



Paving the way for others

SHIRLEY FENECH

RECEPTIONIST, DAR IL-MADONNA TAL-MELLIEHA

ANTOINE BORG

RECEPTIONIST, DAR IL-MADONNA TAL-MELLIEHA

Living in Mellieha, Shirley often passed by the residence 10 years ago, wondering whether the opening of the home would scratch that itch to return to work.

She eventually became one of the first to join the Mellieha home team. Shirley enrolled on a part-time basis as a domestic – this arrangement was quite convenient, as her working hours fit seamlessly with her young children's schooling schedule.

In the meantime, she sat for ECDL exams, which she knew would one day come in handy not only in assisting her children with their schoolwork, but especially if she wanted the opportunity to progress at work.

The gradual reintroduction to the working world after a seven-year break encouraged her to take on a more demanding role at the home. When, four years ago, an internal vacancy

appeared for a receptionist post, Shirley grabbed the opportunity and, backed by her family and colleagues, settled down in her new role.

She soon realised that the reception was a focal point for residents, especially those who could not sleep a wink at night. They often walk up to Shirley during her night shifts, pouring out their hearts. She gladly lends an ear, especially to those who miss their relatives.

Just as Shirley was one of the very first to set foot in the Mellieha home, fellow colleague Antoine will be one of the first to welcome the residents at the spanking new Casa Marija in Sliema.

He spent around four years as a kitchen assistant at the Mellieha home, eventually moving on to take the post of a security porter and then receptionist.

He recently decided to change jobs and move to the new Casa Marija as a facility administrative assistant. In between preparations for the opening of the home, he explains that he is now more involved with human relations.

He believes that CareMalta is very passionate about the development of its employees and supports them through courses and personal growth opportunities.

Antoine expects that welcoming new residents to Casa Marija will be challenging and stressful, but a “beautiful adventure at the same time”, during which he is sure to make friends with colleagues who are new to the company.

While he looks forward to settling down in his new role at Casa Marija, Antoine is also keen to continue developing his skills within the company.



Villa Messina reopens after total revamp

After 20 years of successful operations, Villa Messina underwent a complete revamp in 2016 to pursue its mission to continue offering high quality service to its older population.

Located in Rabat, the home was inaugurated earlier this year, boasting a new design that incorporates dementia-friendly measures and nursing beds to promote further independence and comfort.

The home, planned in a way that creates an environment for residents to enjoy a modern feel, is built to the highest specifications, and is based on the experience the company has in providing a caring environment.

The facility also has a new multipurpose room, new chapel and wellness centre in line with CareMalta's active ageing philosophy.



CareMalta's new nursing home

Casa Marija is CareMalta's new nursing home – the ninth home for the elderly – which opened its doors this summer in the heart of Sliema in Manuel Dimech Street.

Josiann Sammut has been appointed to Facility Manager of Casa Marija, following her role as Deputy Nursing Manager at Casa Arkati. She has been working with Care Malta since 2001, when she had started working as a care assistant.



Speaking CareMalta's language: *I Care*

CareMalta this year launched an ambitious service excellence training programme for all its employees called *I Care*. Developed together with the company's training partners, Think Talent, *I Care* is intended to take the quality of service offered by the company to the next level.

I Care is not a set of instructions, policies or procedures; it's about ensuring that everybody at CareMalta speaks the same language, irrespective of their job or circumstance.



Nazzareno Vassallo Award 2018

Joseph Borg Bonello, a resident at Zammit Clapp home for the elderly, was this year awarded the Nazzareno Vassallo Award organised by CareMalta for his untiring contribution in various sectors of society.

He is still active as the president of the Anglo Maltese League, the Malta Billiards and Snooker Association and is on the residents' committee of Zammit Clapp home.

During the event, former minister, Joseph Micallef Stafrace, was given a special award for his long contribution in the political and legal sectors.

This was the 20th consecutive year that this award ceremony has been held.



CareMalta team goes the extra mile to mark 25th anniversary

Sixty-six CareMalta staff took part in the #zerotwentyfive challenge to mark the company's silver anniversary by running or walking the Vodafone Malta Half Marathon/ walkathon in February.

The goal behind this challenge was not solely to promote physical activity, but to symbolise CareMalta's 25 years in the elderly sector – a journey of resilience, dedication, ambition and teamwork.

The team included Vassallo Group chairman Nazzareno Vassallo, Group CEO Pio



Vassallo and CareMalta CEO Natalie Briffa Farrugia, as well as directors, managers and employees. CareMalta's finance director James

Sciriha, who is an avid runner and member of Mellieha AC, placed 20th overall and 10th among Maltese runners.

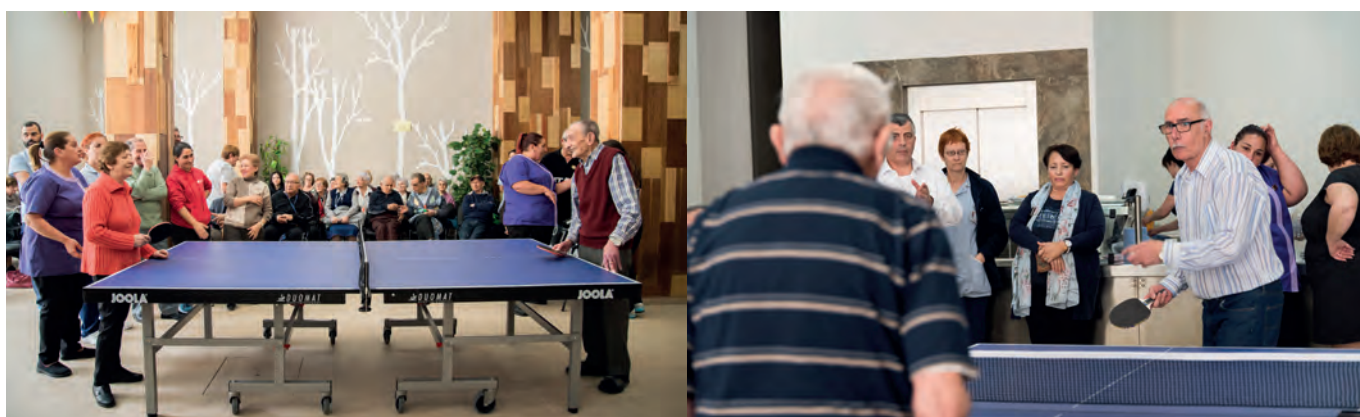


Table tennis brings all CareMalta's homes together

CareMalta organised the first Table Tennis Tournament at Casa San Paolo in Bugibba in March, which brought together residents from all its homes. The event was organised in collaboration with the Table Tennis Association of Malta where residents, management and staff took part in this day of fun and friendly competitive rallies. All participants were presented with a medal and each home received a glass trophy as a token, while the winner was presented with a special trophy.



The Three Arches, Valletta Road, Mosta. MST 9016

info@caremalta.com

www.caremalta.com