

ReU Living introduces assisted care in Kuala Lumpur

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ReU Living Sdn Bhd operates an assisted care facility that is a retirement village, elder care centre and a convalescent home all rolled into one. The company — a joint venture between IGB Bhd, through its wholly-owned subsidiary Tan & Tan Developments Bhd, and Meaningfull Life Sdn Bhd — runs the facility out of Block B at MiCasa All Suites Hotel in Jalan Tun Razak.

Led by CEO Anna Chew, her team includes chief operating officer Estee Tan (who is also general manager of the hotel division at IGB) and head of strategy and risk Tan Pei Lyn. She is also supported by a host of trained carers and professionals.

“Why ReU as a brand? First, the ‘U’ stands for you. We take care of you, the customer. ‘Re’ is for rejuvenate, refresh, recover, renew — all the ‘Re’ terms,” says Chew, who has a background in assisted care.

All this came about because she founded Meaningfull Life and wanted to grow the business. To do so, she needed the right partner.

“When I wanted to expand further, I said I wanted a partner who would be able to fulfil certain bits of the operations that I knew were very important for us to build a proper assisted care business. And the two components missing, from my previous experience, are hospitality and building management. When you want to scale, expertise in building management is very important,” she says.

ReU Living’s facility is housed in the refurbished 5-storey Block B of MiCasa All Suites Hotel. On the ground floor are the dropoff/reception area, clubhouse and family area, while there are 48 guest units offering studio, 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom layouts on the upper floors.

There are a total of 108 bedrooms available for guests. They may choose to occupy one of the bedrooms in a 2- or 3-bedroom unit and share the common living area and kitchen with other guests. According to Chew, one of the residents who recently took up a bedroom in a 3-bedroom unit is inviting two family members to occupy the other rooms.

The rooms are between 120 and 373 sq ft while the studio units are about 438 sq ft. There are also five rooms for high-care patients, with 13 beds, on the ground level.

Block A of MiCasa All Suites Hotel will continue to operate as a hotel. However, if all 108 rooms in Block B are taken up and there are active seniors who don’t need assisted living services but would like to continue living at ReU Living, they can do so in Block A, which has 185 units. Chew says simply that Block B is for those who need assisted living services, while Block A is for independent individuals.

Guests who need convalescent care after an operation can be looked after in Block B. The facility is not only for the elderly but also those much younger who may need quality care that cannot be had at home or a medical facility.

Moreover, recovery and healing at a hospital or medical facility can be expensive and in a very sterile and possibly stark environment. Hence, ReU Living was very intentional about the design aspect to ensure that people are able to live out their retirement years in comfort and also heal well in a wholesome community.

Pei Lyn, who is a trained civil engineer, explains the design elements of the refurbished Block B.



ReU Living operates out of Block B at MiCasa All Suites Hotel



(From left) Estee, Chew and Pei Lyn believe that good building management and hospitality are important components in providing quality assisted care

“During the planning stage, we made sure to dedicate ample space for community and recreational activities. This includes a sensory garden for daytime gardening activities, an outdoor walking path and deck, a multipurpose hall for karaoke and games sessions, and an open pantry for cooking or baking classes.

“We minimised the number of high-touch points by introducing more sliding doors, which are friend-

ly to those who may be using walkers, wheelchairs or crutches. This is also important as we would like to create a more touchless environment as we transition out of the pandemic.

“Non-slip timber textured vinyl flooring makes it easier for residents in wheelchairs or walkers to move about while maintaining the cosy atmosphere. Hospital-grade vinyl flooring is also a more hygienic option since it is easier to clean and does not trap dust mites or other allergens.

“There are additional lighting points to increase the overall brightness of common areas, grab bar railings along long corridors and specific locations in the clubhouse and other in-room renovations, the introduction of non-intrusive technology in the form of gateways, beacons and artificial intelligence to allow our team to monitor our customers’ needs and respond to them in a timely manner.”

The technology used comes in the form of a special device that the guest can wear on a lanyard or like a watch. The device is a tracker, has a fall detection sensor and comes with a call button. The information is synced with computers and tablets used by the staff so they will know where the guests are and whether assistance is needed. This is particularly helpful if someone falls in the bathroom or a place where there isn’t a lot of human traffic. The system is proprietary to ReU Living and was designed in-house, says Chew.

Estee highlights that the MiCasa hotel system was easily modified for ReU Living so that it can collect the relevant information of the guests such as the medication they are taking, their food preferences and other necessary bits of information to ensure the guests’ needs are met.

Comfortable and welcoming environment
With Block B’s refurbishment and redesign com-



pleted and the facility finally open to the public, enquiries have been coming in and there is steady interest in the services provided. Walking through the facility provides *City & Country* with a better idea of what Chew and her team hope to achieve through this assisted care facility.

To begin with, for those coming to ReU Living via Jalan Tun Razak, their vehicle will ascend a ramp wide enough to accommodate an ambulance before arriving at the drop off/reception area. To the left of the drop off/reception space is the family area for family members to wait or chat with guests. To the right is the more than 12,000 sq ft clubhouse.

Walking through the sliding doors into the clubhouse will bring guests to a comfortable dining-cum-activity hall, where simple motor skill games can be played or other activities can be held. There is also a kitchen area for cooking or baking classes.

The large lounge area offers comfortable seating, be it long sofas or single seaters. The arrangement of the furniture allows easy access for users of wheelchairs and walking frames. There is also an outdoor area for those who want to have a cuppa outside or do a spot of gardening.

Guests can book treatment rooms for a facial, pedicure/manicure, a massage or to have their hair styled. These services need to be reserved in advance and guests will be charged a small fee.

The common restrooms are wide enough for wheelchairs to access and there is even a shower area. There is also a multipurpose hall for guests to play parlour games, exercise, dance or sing.

Elder daycare services are held in the clubhouse and various activities are organised by experienced staff.

Chew says possible activities for guests may include chair yoga, therapeutic games, bingo, dancing, coffee time, cooking classes and gardening. The activities will be specially crafted to cater for the physical, psychosocial and mental/emotive needs of the guests, she adds.

Estee explains that the furniture and materials are specially selected to cater for the needs of the guests. For example, the upholstery is both stain-proof and waterproof, sofa cushions are very firm to allow guests to stand up easily and tables are at the correct height for wheelchair users. Tables also have chamfered edges that make it easy to hold on to and it is weighted properly to allow people to put pressure on the table top to stand up without fearing the table will topple over.

Pei Lyn points out that the lights, which are brighter but not glaring, help seniors to see better and the signs have large fonts.

The feel of the space is very calming, which creates a good atmosphere for interaction and healing. The team says such a space helps to alle-

viate loneliness, which is the biggest killer of the elderly, and also provides peace of mind for those who have a senior family member living there, knowing that experienced carers are taking care of their loved ones.

Additionally, those recovering from major surgery can receive the treatment they need without the hassle of making appointments, finding parking and waiting to be attended to. All the arrangements can be made by the staff at ReU Living, which alleviates stress for both the guest and family members.

Lifts are available to access the upper floors. They open up to a reception/nursing station and the wide corridors have handrails along the walls to assist those who need support.

The rooms, from the studio to the 3-bedroom units, are comfortably designed. They give off a homely feel but also ensure ease of movement within the space. The floors are not carpeted, making it easy for wheelchairs and walkers to be used.

The bathrooms are spacious and come with anti-slip flooring and grab rails. The shower area is cordoned off with a shower curtain rather than a glass partition to allow wheelchair access. According to the ReU Living team, rooms can be configured to the guest’s needs, which includes swapping a regular bed for a hospital bed if needed.

While the design of the units cater well for the elderly, it is also ideal for those recovering from surgery and need convalescent care.

“MiCasa is in the city centre and we’re surrounded by eight hospitals within a 5km radius. When we looked at this hotel, we felt that it would be very suitable as a post-hospitalisation facility,” says Estee.

“It is important that you recover well because it is very costly to the country. If you don’t recover well, the cost of prolonged illness is more costly than actually doing a one-time good recovery. People need to understand that actual recovery is the most important bit, so that you can go back to having a normal life,” says Chew.

She adds that ReU Living will partner with “best-in-breed” businesses to provide quality services to those who need it. These include DBC Physiotherapy for physiotherapy and Regal Ambulance for the in-house ambulance service. Other partners provide occupational therapy and licensed counsellors. They are still in the signing-on stage, hence their names could not be revealed at press time.

Apart from the clubhouse and facilities in Block B, guests are also able to use the hotel gym and swimming pool. Meals are provided by Shiso, the hotel’s in-house restaurant.

According to Estee, MiCasa is a test bed for such facilities to provide proof that this type of facility and business model is workable, as the company hopes to replicate it in other locations.

For those looking to reside in the ReU Living



Clockwise from top left: The hotel provides a comfortable environment for retirement and recovery; bedrooms are not carpeted and if required, a hospital bed can be provided; bathrooms have grab rails and allow wheelchair users access to the shower area; the comfortable lounge area with firm cushions for guests to stand up with ease.

facility for retirement or recovery, the fee starts from RM7,800 per month. This affords you a private unit or room; 24/7 care by a team of nurses and caregivers, who will help with medication management and provide basic nursing procedures; hotel-catered meals; housekeeping and laundry services; clubhouse access for activities; a monitoring device; and help coordinating medical appointments with hospitals. Add-on care services include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, professional counselling and ambulance service.

For elder daycare services, the fee is RM5,000 per month and it allows full access to the clubhouse from Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm. The seniors will have hotel-catered meals and be able to participate in specially designed programmes.

For those wondering whether ReU Living could be a place to spend their retirement years but aren’t sure if it is for them, Chew suggests that they attend the elder daycare first before making a decision.

Moving forward, the team hopes to build an education hub to train caregivers, which are sorely lacking in Malaysia today. As for where they wish to expand their product in the future, they can’t say for now as it all depends on what is needed in the location they are interested in. However, Chew mentions that the areas they are looking at for such opportunities will be in cities such as Petaling Jaya, Johor Baru and Penang, that have good amenities nearby like hospitals.

As the need for elder and convalescent care increases in Malaysia, ReU Living’s services will be a welcome offering for those looking for a safe and comfortable environment for their loved ones. ■