

THE *new* Waveny

A Spotlight on Staff who Define our Culture

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It's not uncommon to hear Waveny housekeeper, Ofelia Betancur, singing sweetly through the halls of our campus – always with a beaming smile, a laugh in her voice, and an unmistakable gleam of joy in her eyes. In the eyes of our residents, this is her signature. When Ofelia joined Waveny 13 years ago, she quickly realized that the significance of her role was far more than just performing a job. "You have to think of this job as something that's as important as your family. As important as your own mother. Because every resident is someone's mother, father, sister, brother – their family. My mother isn't here with me, but they are."

When she last returned to her native country, Colombia, to visit her 93 year old mother, Ofelia says that she brought her Waveny spirit with her. "My mother asked me, 'Ofelia, you talk with me and tell me jokes to make me happy – are you like this at work, too?' When I told her, 'Of course!,' my mom was very happy and said, 'Good.'"

Before moving to the United States in 1999, and becoming an American citizen a decade later, Ofelia was a nurse in a large hospital, where she worked in intensive care, surgery and maternity. "I had certain special duties, especially when doctors needed something very sensitive done," she explained. "For example, if a premature baby needed an IV, they would always ask for me." Her first experiences in eldercare began in this role as well. "In Colombia, doctors volunteer in senior places to give care. When they would ask me if I would go with them on my days off, I'd always say, 'Yes, let's go!'"

This unfailing sense of outgoingness to help wherever and whenever she is needed is something that defines Ofelia in her role at Waveny. And, she says her role here is every bit as important as her prior one. When asked

what Waveny means to her, Ofelia's answer came quickly and without hesitation – so instinctively that she couldn't help but respond first in her native tongue. "Waveny es una escuela de vida," she said. With a smile, she explains in English, "Waveny is a school of life. We come here and we learn. We learn about life, we learn about aging. We learn about issues as important as dementia, depression, grief – but we learn about respect and dignity at the same time. There is no school where you can go to learn how to be prepared to take care of your own parents and family some day. But everyone who works at Waveny goes to this school, and gets that education every day."

Recognized widely throughout Waveny for her masterful balance of talent, drive, ethics and compassion, Ofelia's infectious joy touches more people than she realizes. Her artistry brings Waveny's campus to life during the holidays with her incredibly detailed window paintings. And, many of her well-timed songs and jokes have been known to completely transform someone's day.

Ofelia places great responsibility on herself to set a good example for new staff joining her department, because she knows that how they approach their jobs will ultimately impact the lives of many. "I tell them this," she said. "You may have come here for the job, but it's more than a job. The resident is always number one, and you are always number two. If you can't respect that, Waveny's just not the place for you."



"Waveny is a school of life. Everyone who works here learns who they are by respecting and loving others. Love makes us strong. Love makes us brave."

Ofelia Betancur