

Wichita Chamber Business Accelerator

Episode 60

Doug Stark and Robert Miller

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Don and Ebony: [00:00:00] Welcome to another exciting edition of the WCBA powered of course by Evergy. First, thank you for listening. Don't forget to like us, love us, share us. We truly appreciate you checking us out today. We are excited to have ComfortCare Homes in the house.

I am excited because you know what, my best homie Douggie fresh Stark is in the house.

Is that a new nickname?

He has just know he does. And Robert Miller. Welcome gentlemen.

Doug and Robert: Thank Thank you.

Don and Ebony: So glad to have you. here. Tell us a little bit about who you are.

and what you do well, as Don said, my name is Doug Stark and I am the owner of comfort care homes by the way.

Doug and Robert: And, we, provide, long-term care for people with, geriatric dementia or Alzheimer's or some other type of dementia in residential homes.

Don and Ebony: That's Awesome. And Robert.

Doug and Robert: Yes. Ma'am, you know, what's really cool. And I've worked for Doug now about 11 years coming on board with this team at a time in which the company was really in the transformation.

It's exciting to know that we built it off of a 28 year legacy that Doug's family started. I mean, most people don't understand at this point there wouldn't be a thing called a home plus, which is an actual license. Sanctioned by the state of Kansas in Kansas. If Doug's family, hadn't opened the first home in December four of 19, December of 1993, over on morning side is the historical first home.



In the state of Kansas and now, ah, gosh, I think the number is up into the 180 hundred 90 range across the state.

Don and Ebony: Wow. So your family, was the genesis of all of that.

Doug and Robert: Yeah, And the quick story behind that is that both of my grandparents, both of my dad's parents lived right down the street from Kathy and I, and in early eighties, 82, they presented with dementia almost simultaneously.

And so we went down there three or four times a day, and my sister moved in with him for a while. When she was going to Wichita state, my parents finally moved them out to their house, out by Andover. And we were just that family that was not going to place them in a nursing home. Now we'll say back in the eighties, the options were really slim nursing homes.

The big, bad nursing homes. lots of things have happened since then, but, we went to the state, in 92 and we just asked for their blessing to allow us to go out and create a new animal. And we said, we want to take people with dementia are confused anyway, and they can get overstimulate. And what they really, and everybody grew up in a house, nobody grew up in a hotel or a hospital.

Right. So we figured that if we could buy large ranch homes, large lots, and house, anywhere between six and eight residents, all of whom had. dementia of some type, that that would be a much more natural environment for them to live in. We allow them to bring their cat or their dog. They have their own furniture in the bedroom.

It's just truly a way for our residents to enjoy, a regular home. But there of course is 24 hour caregiving. And we do have security measures at the doors where you have to know that. To get in and out, because that's a question that gets asked a lot is what, you know, what happens if somebody gets out right?

They don't because we, we protect that. And what I, think is so, so cool again about this is that you're looking at the Starks and the Starks, Charlie, Mary Lou Doug's parents. Doug came into the business very, very early into that. His sister, none of these people had any medical background. They had a desire, they had a passion.

And yet now. Years later, it's the fastest growing state licensure for housing, for seniors that we have in this state and not being nurses, doctors, and otherwise, they just had a real passionate creating something that has completely transformed how we take care of people with dementia in our state. And out of all the [00:05:00] other states in the union, Kansas is the only one that we're aware of that has specific regulations about this type of care.

So all of this coming from. you know, a family that just had a heart. I was so proud when Charlie and I think it was around 2014, 15, he won, a healthcare hero award and he's pictured up there

with all these nurses and doctors and very well intended people, people that deserve the award. And here's Charlie, someone that had no medical background that changed the history of our company or our country.

We were, we were out to create a social model, not a medical model. That's huge. Cause I was, I, you know, I was really, that was going to be my next question. is, Do you have medical backgrounds? Because I've look to you as you know, the expert in you know, dementia and and care giving and where, what the next step would be.

Don and Ebony: So I thank you for explaining is just because of the passion and what has happened in your own family, That's led you down to this journey.

Doug and Robert: Yeah, the true answer is no, no, no clinical. The 28 years of doing this. Yeah. There's a lot. There's a lot behind that. And certainly Doug's team around him. we you know, we hire nurses.

They have to be sorry. I'm a medical social worker. I've been in the career for about 20 years working from home. Home health hospice. So the knowledge that Doug was able to garnish from bringing the right team to the table has really allowed him to move the company forward in the last 10 years to the next level.

Don and Ebony: So he should not hire Don.

Wow. You know what?

I'm just, you know, it was just a question. So how many employees did you guys start with originally in that original concept? Oh, in the original house. My dad, my mom, my sister and three caregivers. Okay. So it's five, six five to six people, to now present day. How many do you have?

Doug and Robert: 125

Don and Ebony: Isn't that Wow.

Doug and Robert: Wow. Yeah. And I gotta tell ya, it's interesting during a pandemic, during a staffing crisis, during a, I mean, this has been a real interesting year and a half, two years, and I don't mean interesting in a good way. Yeah. Well, we're proud to say today, knowing that so many of our peers, we don't think of, of the competition.

We've really bonded together with others that do similar work to what we do in the field of dementia. We've bonded with those individuals in this time of real struggle. We're proud to say the comfort care homes is a hundred percent staffed as of today, but it took amazing efforts, from us. That is amazing.

And. We, started banging the, vaccination drum last summer. And I just, before we were even allowed to, or, or asked to, I decided that if we're going to be in the healthcare business, we're going to be vaccinated. So Robert and I came up with November one at November one, if you weren't vaccinated, you kind of have to go find another opportunity.

And I am. I still, I get goosebumps when I say this, we got every single caregiver, but one

Don and Ebony: Wow.

Doug and Robert: To get vaccinated.

Don and Ebony: That is amazing. is amazing. Truly.

Doug and Robert: And that's because they buy in and that's, what's so amazing about this whole journey is how many people I've been able to surround myself with from Robert and the nursing team and my daughter, Casey and Mikayla.

And I can go on down the list, but from management to even care about. How many people I've been able to surround myself with, who truly have the passion for doing this. And it takes a passion because this is not easy work well in simultaneously facing the debate over minimum wage and just the workforce stress that had been.

We all acknowledged the COVID wasn't the reason there was a workforce source, a workforce shortage in our area. It had been coming for some time. It was just the catalyst that really brought it to head. but for Doug to go in and give a \$2 non merit raise to all of his staff during this time to say, we're going to bring you in line with the standards we believe are right for the care and the service you're providing, but then additional dollar based on some performance or.

Performances. And for 90 days, most of our staff were able to add \$3 to. To their living wage. We are the highest healthcare provider, highest paid healthcare provider in town. You know, that speaks to your leadership. It speaks to the culture that you're trying to, the environment that you're creating, as this family institution and how your employees can feel a part of, the things that you guys are doing, you know, and a part of your mission.

they don't have to feel bad about saying, well, Walmart pays \$15 target. \$15. We pay \$17. Yeah. So just, just go away and quit talking about that. [00:10:00] We have to give props to Mikayla Gingrich-Gaylord. She, she was the kingpin and the inspiration for some mode, so many of these challenging conversations, how to approach it, how to implement it. And I think one of the best stories is when we began to roll this out, Mikayla wanted to bring every staff member individually to give them time to understand and ask questions about the vaccination, but also understand the merit or the non merit raise, but the increases we were going to make. And there were times when she would walk out of that meeting in the conference room and bring a caregiver to Doug's office in tears and what happened?

They were like, you've, you really just don't know how important this, these changes are. To me personally, thank you for changing, you know, changing things and making me feel safe and giving me more money to do the work that I do.

Don and Ebony: Excellent. Excellent. Now you hit on the entrepreneurial story just a little bit, but I want to go to the, the, rather that what gave your folks audacity to think they could start kind of business and be successful.

Doug and Robert: In my father's obituary five years ago, they termed him a serial entrepreneur.

And that's what he was. And that's where I got my training and my leadership. he, he was a burger king franchisee. He started a fish and chips restaurant here in Wichita, down at Pawnee and hydraulic before fish and chips was even cool. Ken's pizza. he started the very first Hi-Fi, store, back back in the fifties when TV was just coming out and stereo was just coming out.

He opened a business called it Stark Suburban Sound, and many, many, many folks here in Wichita still have that old, console in their living room that they bought from him 40 years ago.

Don and Ebony: Ebony remembers that store

Yeah, she does. She does,

Doug and Robert: But no, I mean, he literally just went from one business to the business, to the next business.

And it was like, Hey, there's an opportunity here.

people with dementia being placed in a large environment where there's all sorts of noise and the dining room was all the way down here and to the right, and everybody's a stranger. He just thought that, that that's not a good idea for somebody who's confused. And so let's do something different. Yeah, it was, brilliant.

Doug and Robert: Yeah, it was it was brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.

Don and Ebony: I love it. Serial entrepreneur. I'm I'm all about.

Doug and Robert: And I have to say I was really honored when I came on. Charlie was still, he was retired, but he was still engaging in the company. We had, built a, an advanced care, home for lack of a better word called founder's crest, where we take care of individuals with much more advanced. Of the disease. It was a custom built that we did and we opened in 2014.

Charlie was there at the open house. He still walks the building and gave us feedback. I'm honored that I had a chance to know your dad's,

Don and Ebony: Excellent. And for you that for you then. 100 and get my math, right. 124 out of 125 folks take the vaccine. That's just leadership. I mean, that's yeah, that's a beautiful thing. Speaking of leadership, let's talk about, I heard you won the chamber. Small business award was 20 16, 20 16, 20 16.

Doug and Robert: You know, it was an interesting thing for us because, your modesty goes into these things like, well, we're not going to win, even though your heart says we deserve to win. And so it was a really.

Don and Ebony: What made it, what made it special? You said it was a great experience. What made it great?

Doug and Robert: Well, first and foremost, we hadn't been engaging the chamber as probably aggressively or taking advantage of it as we had been. this was, still in the middle of kind of me getting involved in a lot of the front end marketing for the company. So one, it was just exciting to start meeting people and getting involved.

we had some coaches and mentors, people that were like, Hey, you really should do this. And so. But the application process seemed a bit daunting. That was, that was what I wanted to come in on the application process. Other than some of the. programs in town where nominate somebody to be nominate somebody to be, this was truly a God.

Doug and Robert: Robert did most of it, but I thought he was writing a thesis. I mean, it was a stack of papers and lots of in and out and lots of, I mean, it was homework and there was lots of work. And then they came out and they visited not once, but twice. And I just felt like. You know, when they called our name, like Robert said, It was like, oh, come on.

Oh, come on. You know, this can't be real, but I got the feeling of, you know, we did deserve this because, they looked at all of the companies, pretty deeply. I mean, they, they didn't just go, you know, we like you better than this guy. it was, what does it say on paper? What have you accomplished? What have you done?

And, it was amazing.

Don and Ebony: It was amazing. Excellent. I liked, I [00:15:00] liked that word.

Doug and Robert: That process was so in-depth. And at first seemed daunting what we realized it was important for our company to ask these questions internally, to go through the process with our team, to really think about what diversity meant to our company, to what, you know, certain systems meant to our company.

And really it's a great guiding tool for all of us to go through. And like Doug said, I think because you had to make such an investment, it added value to an award that sometimes you're not.

How people really make the decision. The day that we won, we had a, Doug had a large table. We were all there. Our primary competition that year was Mahoney roof, Damon young, sorry, Damon young.

I mean, he, when we saw him present and he had tears in his eyes about the work that they do, which is so amazing with, very similar clients dealing with challenges like our caregivers. We were like, there's no way. And I actually still have video of when they made the announcement and Doug's shock on his face.

And it was an award that has to this day, been something with every orientee class. We remind them, these are the things that the company has achieved. That really matters to you.

Don and Ebony: Is there anything in your business that you started doing after the process or stop?

Doug and Robert: Wow. That's big because what I will tell you is I think I'm coming to the management table and it's continued to evolve now. And with the directors and the execs, we have, we're far clearer about our why and our intention. And I really believe that it started by going through that process. It can be so subtle sometimes the trickle in the pond, right.

That the impact of going through that process and the pride of having that award sitting on the front mantle when everybody walks in our office, to the extent actually, when we want it, Doug had it placed. We had at the time about nine or 10 homes, he asked that the award it's a beautiful glass card award was placed in every single home for a month

So the residents, the staff and the families enjoy it when it finished that tour of the homes, it's now permanently placed in the office.

But it really just, again, made us realize. Especially as a healthcare provider that sometimes doesn't get recognized amongst some of the bigger businesses that we do matter at school.

Don and Ebony: So I would guess this is just a guess here that you would recommend anybody that's nominated for it.

Doug and Robert: Absolutely. Absolutely. Cause it will make you drill down into why do you exist? It really does. That's what it's all about. And the honor of being on the SBA. So the small business of work. when you, when, as an alumni, you get invited to sit in the community, continue future planning, and I continue to do

Let's do that. today, today. Yeah. So, we meet regularly. I give my feedback, we talk about future events. I help with soliciting and mentoring other small businesses to not be afraid of the process. And that's that pay it forward for us.

Don and Ebony: I want to remind everybody that small business awards will be held, March 9th, applicant showcase. April 13th has SBA finalist scrambler and May 25th is the awards luncheon.

Awesome. Well, thank you for paying it forward and stand on that committee because that is that's something big. I am curious to hear, curious to hear.

Oh, do that. Cause she can go. She can flow. So we might be here until tomorrow. So.

I want to know what surprised you the most in your entrepreneurial ship journey.

Doug and Robert: Again, I would say in my eyes, the ability to have people come to my company and I'm talking mainly now for the management team and not just for a paycheck. But for a desire to make a difference, you know, something that Alzheimer's is a horrible disease.

It's a horrible disease. And the, the resident, and we don't have patients, we have residents.

Don and Ebony: Okay.

Doug and Robert: The resident isn't going to get better. They're going to just slowly get worse. And yet to have, a management team of about 12 people. That all have been around for a pretty good amount of time, because they believe in this.

They truly, they truly have the passion that I do about it. And that's, I would say that right there is the thing that I have been most surprised and impressed with, but these are real heroes and they, I, I don't want to see, it's been trivialized with COVID. There's been a lot of discussion of frontline workers.

And a lot of celebration or trying to call out to people who are heroes and they all deserve it from the hospital to whatever the caregivers that go into our homes every day will never be seen on TV. Most of the time, the families that are working with this are in their own struggle. Sometimes they know how to say thank [00:20:00] you.

Sometimes they don't. These are individuals that are dealing with complicated dementia from early to late stage. These young professionals, these professional caregivers are learning, making their mistakes and growing in their own careers as well. But none of that really tends to get recognized. So when I say that they're a hero, they matter more than Mr.

Stark and I do on a daily basis. The nursing team is right behind them, but you know, families reach a point where they cannot provide this care in home. Rightfully so we understand why that is not a. But these caregivers manage this care eight to 12 hours a day and they don't leave. So, you know, they deserve it.

They're the heroes in this story. Thank you for saying that, because that truly is important. Thank you for reminding us of that as well. Well, friends, we are here with our friends from comfort care homes, but we have to take a break and hear a word from our sponsors. So we'll be writing. Back friends. We are here with Doug Stark and Robert Miller of comfort care homes, we're excited to hear their story. What makes Wichita unique? Why do business in this is the most incredible entrepreneurial city in the United States. I firmly believe that firmly believe in so many national organizations started here in Wichita and we're not a national organization.

We've got our nine homes here in Wichita. We have two opinions. But, still you just, when you're around people who take the risk, when you're around people who say, you know, something, I'm going to try this and, you know, I, whatever I tell a caregiver, whenever I'm having an opportunity with a caregiver or a nurse, and they're not happy about this or not happy about that.

Doug and Robert: And I go, you know, something, but you're not the person that goes to bed every night, owing the bank's \$3 million. I am. I am, and I don't lose sleep over it because I know what we're doing. And I know that what we're doing well, it has been successful 28 years, but it's, we're doing the right thing, but still, nobody else is sharing that, sharing that burden right now.

So, but Wichita isn't, Wichita's a great place to do. Business really is, you know, and from a healthcare standpoint also entrepreneurial. Endeavors. When you look at a lot of the, hospital concepts and the things that really do start here and end up influencing other parts of the country. It's pretty exciting.

We've had people from all over the country that have reached out to us to ask about our model. Doug has always been willing to say, I'd be glad to consult or come to your community. We've offered to speak to their legislation in those states, bring models of what has been achieved here in Kansas, because we really believe it's unique and it's important.

You know, this is a question you didn't ask, but, out of all the states in the union, up until a year and a half ago, there was only one state in this country that did not have a legislatively driven Alzheimer's plan. Kansas was that state and this guy right here, Robert Miller forced that through, he spent tons of time up in Topeka.

And, we, I mean, we just, we were, and of course we've both been very involved. I was on the board of the Alzheimer's association for 14 years. So, that's kind of a baby of ours too, but, but, you know, for our state not to have a plan, every other state had us. Yeah.

That was a fascinating process.

And an honor, there had actually been a committee that had been forged a year before. By the governor, and then when Governor Kelly became governor, she asked and restated for a secondary community to finish or [00:25:00] continue that work. And I was invited to be on that

committee. It was nice. It was ran by the Alzheimer's association.

they kind of led the meetings. We had amazing talent. You think of Dr. Steven Benson and, and other constituents and great suggestions were, were put forward that were presented to the governor's office. So There is a. The stiff Kansas, sadly again, you move then into a state of COVID or a pandemic. it really changed some of the momentum, but it is on record.

Doug and Robert: What has been suggested as continued improvements for not only commerce and business in the state, but healthcare providers moving forward as we face this diseases that has to do with training. Yes. You know, and I gotta just, I'm just going to say that there are a number of us don't.

There are, there are a number of other providers in town that say they do memory care, but the same caregiver that was down the hall, taking care of somebody who was frail elderly is today in the memory care area and all cybers disease is its own animal.

It is not, it is not just. People with dementia there they're paranoid. They think people are stealing from it, not all, but these are traits that you probably have heard of sundowning a lot of times four or five o'clock in the afternoon and they're up and they're busy and they're wanting to there's time to go somewhere and it's time to do something.

And, you know, you've got the incontinence issues and you've got, you know, folks who, you know, unless you really sit there and feed them, and feed them properly. They're not going to be well-nourished. And this is training. And that's one thing that we do when, when a caregiver comes to us, we do them on Monday.

We have training classes, six or eight people on a Monday, and they go through an entire day of, of what is it like to care for somebody with dementia? What is it like, what are our goals? What does, you know, what are our ideals? and then they, they follow that up in the homes the next two days. And then they come back on Friday.

And they go through a whole four hours of specifically Alzheimer's disease and organically, what is it doing to your brain and why do they do what they do because of the disease process. They're not just trying to mess with you. They've got a disease and they can't help themselves. And, that's just a core of our company.

We're not going to put somebody out there that doesn't has not gone through our program. We know all across the board, if it's frail, elderly or otherwise. Ongoing training as what caregivers really need, what they get from their initial certifications. Isn't enough. And like the rest of us, I'm a, I'm a licensed master social worker.

I have continuing education requirements, but learning process doesn't stop just because you started the job. And I think that's a part of being an expert. We make our mistakes. We don't

know. We admit we do not know everything. It would be impossible to know everything that could potentially happen to someone you're caring for, with them.

But how you live that experience and create solutions to the challenges that they have. So they feel safe, included, productive. That's, what's really cool about our engagement. And, and So as much as we may have some criticism, We know we have to do better ourselves and we continue to challenge ourselves every day.

Don and Ebony: So when you, when you talk about engagement, when does a family engage? you? When, when should a family. begin thinking about, you know, coming to you.

Doug and Robert: You know, th th th it's understood that a lot of families today are defending in place. They're trying to take care of mom and dad are home. It's not that bad yet.

So we get that question of when is the right time, and we actually have a checklist on our website. Allows people to kind of go through those series of questions. The answer is it's different for everybody. For. example, myself, with my own grandmother, I knew that when we reached a point of incontinence care, I could not, I can physically do incontinence care, but I couldn't do that for her.

And I don't know that she would've felt comfortable with me doing it. Right. So that's when you have to say for. We're going to have to get some professional help. If that's in-home services replacement for others, it's when they don't remember who you are anymore. Or, for some of the relationships between spouses, when a spouse doesn't know how to let go, and they're trying to be a caregiver and they're constantly reminding someone.

No, no, no. Don't you remember your mother died last year. They don't understand that that's just, retraumatizes the resident, the client. And so the worst thing you can say. To somebody with Alzheimer's is don't you remember? Yeah, of course they don't remember. They wouldn't be asking you the question over and over and over if they remembered.

So often our first interventions with families come when there's been. Something tragic. There's been a fall, we've been hospitalized. Someone's gotten hurt. Dad got [00:30:00] out the front door and we lost him for an hour two or a day. You know, these are real things that happen, but more and more, we're really finding, and I'm going to credit this to the baby boomer kind of mentality.

and also. We speak to the millennials today. These are individuals that do better at saying, I don't know that I know that, and I need to get some research. I don't know that I understand that. So we're getting more and more people that actually call. They actually know the terms for the diagnosis of dementia.

Doug and Robert: They they're doing more and more to educate themselves. So that, that

process now might be six months. We might get a call six months before we ever place. Yeah. Versus two weeks. Exactly. which to me is that's a crisis situation. People should really be reaching out, asking for help that can be started with the Alzheimer's association, but it equally can start by just calling comfort care homes directly and asking myself or our other social worker, Alyssa.

Hey, can I just ask some questions is what should I be looking for? When is the right time and go through the reason we do a tremendous amount of counseling. Family have come into the office, maybe a couple of sisters, husband, whatever with mom and they're wanting to place dad and we're around the table and there's lots of tears. There's lots of, I mean, this is, I tell people that for, for a spouse to place someone into the care of somebody else after 66 years, whatever that is one of the most important five decisions you'll ever make. Like, what's your education, what's your job going to be? Who are you going to marry? I mean, That's big.

And so we do, like Robert said, we do a lot of, you know, you know, don't, don't, don't try to correct or try to try to redirect by doing this and that. And we do a lot of stuff to try to help families in their homes, deal with this. and then at some point they just kind of get to the point where they go, we can't do this anymore.

And, but now we've known each other for six months and we're ready.

Don and Ebony: Excellent. Well, wow. We've learned a lot today. And, and, that's what this podcast is for. I want to pivot just a little bit what's next on the frontier of comfort care homes. What's next.

Doug and Robert: Yeah, that is an awesome question. There's what want. And there's probably what I want to be good.

Well, no, I'll tell you, we just, all of our, original homes, all of the homes on the east side of town are all, just single family homes on streets. Like tally ran, broad war morning side. You could drive up and down the street every day. There's no sign. You couldn't, you couldn't tell our house from any other house on the block.

We decided after 20 some years of doing this and knowing that this house would have been better, if it was this way and this house would have been better, we went out to 29th and Tyler and we worked for, gosh, almost a year with our architect to design. The what we consider the perfect house. And we built two of them right next door to each other.

They share a courtyard, they back up onto a lake. and now these are all each homes for 12. but, you know, it's just the, let me put it this way. We opened the first home in November of 20 and we opened the second home in, February of 21 and both homes were full by March.

24 residents in a matter of about 60 days. We already have a list of people on a wait list.

Or we had some, You know, because we knew we were doing the project, we were promoting like most people do. We had some pre-sales and people that were interested, but again, that this kind of care, sometimes people aren't ready till they're ready. So, you know, They're waiting for that moment that says I have to do this.

So once the doors were open and people realized it was there and we worked with the number of referral sources and great low straight people that we already do a lot of people in a short amount of time. Well ask our nurses.

Yeah,

Don and Ebony: Oh my gosh.

Doug and Robert: I spent a lot of time mediating within the company just saying, okay, how do we pace this out?

How do we make sure the staff. So, you know, we were, even though that was happening quickly, we were setting some standards like, you know, w we'll bring no more than two in a week, even though people might want it quicker. It, it was a fun process, but it's also one of the things that can add stress to the company.

And we, we managed it.

Don and Ebony: Well, it seemed like you guys going to be busy.

I would say, so you mentioned the website and contacting you a couple of times. Can we talk about, can you please tell the audience what your website is?

Robert is Mr. Websites, Things that Doug doesn't like. Yes, I am the low-tech person in the company. I am quite proud of. Although we were able to get you away [00:35:00] from your fat binder thing with notes and things flying out of it. He really functions off of a phone. He puts calendar invites and outlook you.

I got rid of my AOL account.

after all the oh yeah.

After all this

years,

Doug and Robert: we've

kind of told them,

Don and Ebony: you know what AOL is.

Doug and Robert: I'm 29. yeah, people can find a find us at www.Comfortcarehomes.com. And the cool thing too, is that there are tabs there for both the Newton home and the Wichita home. there are resources and I would encourage people. We do a lot of content development for people to read about the disease. Get good information, as well as, kind of how we do our business.

And then, like I said, when is it time checklist. And some of that family education tools, they're all out there there's even a tool on what should I be asking if I'm searching for a care home? Yeah. We believe if you ask the same questions of us, of anybody, you'll find the conclusions for yourself, we trust are our customers.

I honestly am proud to say, I think our website is an educational website. Yeah.

It's not just a website to say, here we are, and we're bright and shiny and we're good. And we're whatever, and here's the price. If somebody is really suffering with this, they can go through all the different pages of the website and learn what they're dealing with and how to deal with it.

Yup. And then, you know, just calling it's a one-stop number. So 3 1 6 6 8 5 3 3 2 2. Our offices, you know, if someone calls with a question, Hey, I need to talk to something. Somebody on a subject it's very easy, but I would really encourage people to take a look at our Facebook page, a ComfortCare Homes, Wichita.

And that's because a website tells you. Really great stuff, but to see the personality and the daily life of these residents, the quality of the engagement, the joyous moments they're there. we're really fortunate. The majority of our families allow us to post pictures of these things, these activities, and it's heartwarming.

And back to Mikayla, you know, she is inspirational in how she tells the stories on our Facebook page. So you've mentioned Mikayla a couple of times.

Don and Ebony: So let's just talk. Who is Mikayla?

Doug and Robert: Mikayla is vice-president of operations. She has, she actually has a art degree from KU.

Don and Ebony: Oh, wonderful.

Doug and Robert: But, that art degree moved into healthcare about 20 years ago.

And so, she has been in various segments of healthcare. she was brought to us by a mutual friend and, it was, it took me about 15 minutes to, you know, what do I need to do to get you now be honest? What, what I have been telling you for, I know that. I had known her.

We,

I wish chair of this.

this. is my office wife.

Yeah,

it's

Don and Ebony: it's true.

Doug and Robert: It's true. I was the chair and the founder or co-founder of the state Alzheimer's conference to the Alzheimer's association. After eight years of doing it ended up being the third largest Alzheimer's country. Conference in the country up to 800 people participating.

And I, at a certain point had been telling the team, I know of this gal named Mikayla, she was working someplace else. I want her to speak for us. And so that was two years prior to hiring. I'd have the honor of working with her at that level. And I just kept saying, it's a dream, know that she'll ever come to us or we'll ever have that.

But then one day I find out he had lunch with her and I'm like, it's happening,

It's happening.

Don and Ebony: He listened.

Doug and Robert: And that's a soup, you know, with Casey. Casey is our other vice president of environmental ops. We have a really strong team. Casey is Doug's daughter, third generation Stark in the business. We're so fortunate to have a talent team that have weathered the storms and still show up every day with inspiration.

Yep.

Don and Ebony: Thank you for sharing

Yeah. Excellent. Well, I think it's that time you've dealt with Ebony long enough time to have some fun up in here. We're going to do a little word association. Little rapid fire. I give you one word to give me one word back. it's not wrong because it's your word or your word? Whoever's

word. It is ready.

Ready? Buckle up. Buttercup. Here we go. Leader.

Doug and Robert: Doug.

Don and Ebony: Oh, wow. It was good. That was nice. What did success do we both? Yeah. Yeah. I'll just go

Doug and Robert: no, No, no, no, no. success is when a family, two words, family appreciation.

Don and Ebony: Excellent. College.

Doug and Robert: Didn't have any, important

Don and Ebony: Okay. Failure.

Doug and Robert: Can't.

Don and Ebony: Nice. What's your

Doug and Robert: Necessary.

Don and Ebony: Okay. Wichita.

Doug and Robert: Home. Greatest 65 years.

Don and Ebony: Hero,

Doug and Robert: Robert is my hero.

Don and Ebony: Whoa.

Doug and Robert: He really is. He really is.

I'll buy you lunch.

Don and Ebony: Nice the chamber.

Doug and Robert: Proud.

Don and Ebony: Okay family. [00:40:00]

Doug and Robert: Everything.

Don and Ebony: I bet. Fun.

Doug and Robert: Travel.

Don and Ebony: Last but not least. And you both have to tell the truth on this one,

my favorite

beverage

Doug and Robert: Scotch.

Don and Ebony: Boom.

Doug and Robert: Dr. I'm boring.

I don't party with Robert.

Don and Ebony: Nice. Thanks for coming on guys.

Yeah. It has been a pleasure. Thank you for being here and sharing your story friends. We've just heard from Robert and Doug from ComfortCare Homes.

If you found value in this story, please share it with your circle of influence and share it with your friends. Make certain that you like us and leave a comment on who you want to hear. from next. Also coming up for some important dates. The small business awards events will be happening March 9th. The applicant showcase April 13th, SBA finalist scrambler, and May 25th.

We have our awards luncheon. So I hope to see you there.