

Value Place Gainesville, FL has a special presence in its sunny community populated with medical professionals, and patients seeking long-term medical care. The city is home to the University of Florida with 53,000 students and 25,000 faculty members on hand. Shands medical center at UF is the primary teaching hospital for the UF College of Medicine with specialties in transplant, cancer treatment, cardiovascular care, neurology, children's medicine, and even offers a trauma center. Also near the property are the North Florida Regional and VA Hospitals. The property team at Value Place Gainesville, FL has established a close relationship within this community through personalized marketing tactics and genuine care at the property for guests seeking medical treatment.

Affordability truly makes the difference to the guest population at this location. These guests are highly educated individuals and include resident doctors, interns, and physical therapists. However, since they work on very demanding schedules, an economy lodging option is ideal because they don't spend very much time in their rooms. This group is respectful, and since they are usually on call, the property is a calm environment without much commotion. Another large guest population is patients undergoing long-term medical treatment plans. According to Clara Edwards, Guest Attendant and Marketing Specialist at the property, these guests are very happy to have Value Place, and consider it a quiet safe haven during a difficult time. Clara and property owner Jeanne Wall have put a personalized marketing plan in place to not only convert these two guest segments to the property, but to keep them staying on for weeks (and sometimes months) to come.

Jeanne shares that spreading the word of Value Place's affordability to patient care coordinators is at the heart of their marketing plan. These individuals employed by the hospitals assist in finding lodging for patients and their families in the Gainesville community. About five times a year, the property team delivers a small gift to the hospital staff and patient care coordinators. These are usually simple, handmade gifts that show the warmth Value Place has for its guests and the local medical community – while displaying our affordability. In return, the patient care coordinators are familiar with Value Place, and refer patients and their families to the property. "The coordinators appreciate the low weekly rate, our full kitchens, and kind staff," said Jeanne of the results from this outreach.

In terms of advertising and promotion to share the property's affordability, Clara arranges to run print ads in the hospital patient guides. They also advertise through flyers placed at ten racks around the Shands hospital campus. Clara attends the Hospital Hotel Expo annually to get face-to-face conversations with the medical community. She said that Value Place is uncomplicated to promote, "because our property is located just three miles from the college and hospital, we are minutes from some of the best medical facilities in the southeast."

The communication does not stop after an introduction and the reservation is made. When a guest checks in, the front desk will ask them who the patient care coordinator was that referred them. Then, the property team will email a "thank you for the referral" message followed by a personal, hand written note to the patient care coordinator or hospital social worker. "This goes a long way with hospital teams, and keeps Value Place top of mind as an excellent, caring lodging option," says Jeanne of this contact. During their stay, the team gets to know guest patients very well. Once a comfort level has been established, the property team

interviews these guests who are patients and sends the positive feedback to their list of patient care coordinators. This is not only for promotion and relationship building, but to give the hospitals peace of mind that these guests are safe and happy at Value Place Gainesville, FL.

“Transplant patients typically stay around two months. Cancer and heart patients stay weeks or months. Families with children at Shands usually bring extended family members to lend support and Value Place provides a safe and affordable retreat for these medical guests. Shands, North Florida Regional, and the VA Hospital staff refer their patients to us because of the care our team extends,” said Jeanne.

Value Place Gainesville, FL has relationships established with other local organizations such as the Ronald McDonald House and the Hope Lodge (a part of the American Cancer Society.) When the Ronald McDonald House is full, they will refer adult guests to Value Place. The property team also volunteers at the Hope Lodge by lending its expertise in cleanliness, and extending its “99-step clean” skills to the Hope Lodge kitchen. In return, the Hope Lodge will refer guests to Value Place when it’s full, too. “This goes to show that when you market not only your property, but your own time, it really makes a difference to those who make or affect the lodging plans,” said Property Manager Steve Strange.

Medical tourism accounts for between 20 – 30 percent of the property’s annual business. “Being near one of the best teaching hospitals in the southeast, and a large VA Hospital, creates stability of income for our property,” said Jeanne. “UF will always have a vibrant student population. Shands and the VA Hospital will always need affordable housing for their patients. So we will continue to market our affordability, and our team, to these groups for years to come.”

Aside from advertising externally, Value Place Gainesville, FL endorses itself through excellent service to these medical professionals and patients during every point of their stay. “Being away from home when you are sick is hard. Our team members do all they can to treat each guest with TLC and recognize that some have special needs,” shares Jeanne.

Long-term guest Herbert would agree with this. When asked about his experience staying at Value Place during treatment, he fully disclosed that “As a Shands cancer patient, it became necessary for my wife and me to be away from our home in Melbourne, FL for more than 100 days. Value Place Gainesville, FL provided us with a comfortable, clean, and hospitable environment to stay during this period. Enduring a bone marrow transplant procedure is very stressful and is compounded when you are not at your home. Value Place provided us with the next best thing to being home and helping to ease some of my stress.”

Another example of a satisfied guest is a family with a child with severe cerebral palsy. The mother explained their situation to the property team when she made the reservation, and let them know that their son could not sleep on an elevated bed. The team quickly went to work to help this guest. When the family arrived, the property attendant had already removed one of the bed bases and placed one mattress (protected with a zippered mattress encasement) directly on the floor for the child. The mother immediately fell in love with Value Place because no other hotel had ever anticipated their needs.

Another promise to its visitors is that Value Place Gainesville, FL will never bump a current guest for new occupancy, because the team knows that these guests need their rooms

for recuperation, or while on time-consuming medical work schedules. To keep these guests comfortable, Value Place Gainesville, FL tested and installed Hunter Douglas blackout shades so that they can sleep better. Patients love this because it helps them rest throughout their treatment and recovery, and doctors who work long night hours appreciate this when they need to catch some sleep during the day. These blinds also help with energy savings and have a lifetime warranty. Jeanne makes a special note that “We took every necessary step possible with the team at VPFS Home Office to ensure that these shades were in line with Value Place operational standards. It was a detailed process, but we’re glad we followed it.”

The property team even looks at the building exterior daily when considering the comfort of its guest segments. The building is nicely landscaped and well-lit so that guests can comfortably walk the grounds. Since walking and fresh air is important to health and a part of many guests’ treatment plans, the property takes extra care in this outdoor area.

These personalized marketing tactics mixed with a good dose of genuine care for guests has proven to be a powerful combination at Value Place Gainesville, FL for guest conversion and comfort. Way to go, Value Place Gainesville, FL, and keep up the great work playing active role marketing in your community, and keeping affordability top of mind for our guests!