



*Cottages of Lake St. Louis*

In June 2017, I visited the Cottages of Lake St. Louis, Missouri's first Green House® model home. The Cottages is a state licensed and Medicare certified skilled nursing home with a campus that consists of six small cottages and an administrative building. Each cottage has ten private bedrooms, central open kitchen, dining room, den, spa, and family room with a fireplace. There are three enclosed courtyards situated so that each one serves two cottages.

The first elder moved in on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. By my visit, 26 elders occupied three of the six cottages. They expect to open the fourth by mid-June.



*Owner Al Beamer in front of the Administration Building*

I met with owner Al Beamer, Al's son Matt, and Administrator Sherry King.

Sherry said, "We aren't here to provide the most efficient routines. We work around the residents' lives." There is an extensive interview process to ensure that the elders' preferences are met.

Therapy staff visits each cottage to provide therapy services. One cottage specializes in rehab-to-home.

Each cottage is equipped with public Wi-Fi and community computers with internet and web cameras.

There are no medication carts. Except for narcotics and refrigerated medications, medications are stored in cabinets in individual elders' rooms. In addition to 24-hour pharmacy services, they have a Pyxis dispensing system for emergency medications, late-night move in, or PRN medications.

Care partners launder each resident's clothing individually in-house.

They subscribe to a van service with 12 vans so as many as are needed can be accommodated anytime.

Al, Matt, and Sherry shared several stories of how the Green House model impacts the elders' quality of life. One elder who moved from a traditional nursing home said it was the first time she had been able to sleep through the night in years. Another had been put in a wheelchair for staff convenience because her room was so far down a long hallway. She no longer uses a wheelchair.



*Administrator Sherry King shows off a “talking stick” used for learning circles*

Not only are residents happier, so are employees. Kath said, “People want to be part of this model. They can know the elders and make a difference. A bad day for us is still a good day if you came from institutional.” Care partners wear polo shirts, rather than scrubs. CNAs attend care conferences. There are so many nurses interested in working there that they have to turn really good nurses away. In addition to taking care of medical needs, like passing medications, you might also clean the dishes.

Each cottage is staffed by self-led teams with two care partners on day and evening shifts and one on night shift. Guides serve as mentor for two cottages. Nurses also serve two cottages each.

There are no call-lights or audible call signals. Calls go directly to iPhones issued to the care partners. Charting is conducted real-time on the phones. The video doorbells also send alerts to the phones.





*Dining room*



*Enclosed courtyard between two cottages*



*Cottage front entrance*

Menus, mealtimes, and shopping lists for each cottage are developed based on input gathered during household meetings.

The Food Service Manager, who is an experienced fine dining chef, trains all cottage staff in meal preparation. He uses fresh foods to do basic prep for meals. It is then distributed and cooked by cottage staff in the open kitchens. He also fills the shopping lists, which cottage staff members pick up at the administrative building to stock the pantries.



*Open kitchen*

Cottage stoves require an activation code for safety. Induction cooktops are cool to touch but capable of heating water from room temperature to boiling in less than a minute. Dishwashers clean dishes at 180° in 1½ minutes. Each cottage also has a second refrigerator for residents' personal items.



*Elder Dotty Centorbi*

Elder Dotty Centorbi grew up in Shreveport, LA. She met her husband when she was only 14, while he was stationed at Camp Polk military base. He went overseas and they wrote letters while apart. They got married



when she was 18-years-old. He returned to Shreveport on February 28<sup>th</sup>; they got engaged on March 4<sup>th</sup>, and were married on August 6<sup>th</sup>.

They enjoyed traveling and took a lot of trips together. They were married 63 years and had two sons. She was the President of the Mothers Club and Vice-President of the PTA when her sons were in school. She volunteered at Christian Northeast Hospital in Florissant for 15 years and logged 6500 volunteer hours. Her husband developed Alzheimer's disease. He passed away on Christmas day in 2008.

She has had both knees replaced. This past November, she fell and crumbled her femur. "I had surgery from my hip to below my knee and have a lot of metal in my leg." She was previously at another nursing home but said she feels blessed to have learned about the Cottages. Her sons visited to check it out and both fell in love.

She said she doesn't feel like she just has a room. Because of the environment, she is doing more than she did when she lived alone in an apartment. The food is good. The staff is so helpful. She said they make her feel good by joking with her. She also said she feels like she knows the owners, Al and Kathy, personally.



*Harry Murphy*

91-years-old Harry Murphy was born in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania. He moved to Washington DC just in time for Pearl Harbor Day. He couldn't understand why the War Department and Navy Department buildings had sandbags out until he heard about the attack on the radio.

His first job was with Western Union. He said they only let him deliver a singing telegram once. He then worked in the Press Office for the Assistant Solicitor General with the Department of Justice for ten years. In 1943 he volunteered for the Air Corps Reserve and finished high school as a reservist. He received a letter of reference from a Department of Justice Judge. He served 11 years in the reserves and regular service, serving in World War II and the Korean Conflict. He was stationed at Scott Airforce Base in Bellville, Ill. He told me about going on an Honor Flight trip to Washington DC and said, "It was tremendous."

He met his wife when she came to a USO dance at Scott Field. They were married in 1951 and had three sons and three daughters. He now has nine grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

His wife went back to school when she was in her 50s. She graduated with a Political Science degree and was active in local politics.

He worked for AT&T over 35 years in St. Louis, Kansas, and California, including 25 years as a supervisor. After retiring from AT&T, he worked for H&R Block for 18 years. After retiring from H&R Block, he provided volunteer tax help.

He and his wife moved from California to a retirement community in Boerne, Texas, where she passed away in 2014. He decided to move back to St. Louis after his son moved from Texas.

He has lived at four long-term care communities. What he likes the most about the cottages is that there are only ten residents. He also especially likes his room and sitting in the sun on the patio.

He enjoys the activities and putting jigsaw puzzles together. One of the puzzles was too big for the table they had so they brought in a bigger table. He receives therapy three times per week to work on his balance. He said he has gotten to know the staff really well.

The food is good and he likes that he can get something else if he doesn't like what is being served.



*Elder Steve Schulte working on a puzzle with his wife Kathy, daughter Shannon, and grandchildren Ali and Lucas*

Elder Steve Schulte is from St. Peters. He has three children and seven grandchildren. He and his wife Kathy were both teachers for the Pattonville School District, where he was the head of the Math Department.

Steve has had Parkinson's disease for seven years. He had Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) surgery, which was initially very successful. Kathy said, "He was the poster child for Parkinson's." Until about four years ago, they were very active and travelled extensively. They visited Australia, China, Israel, Fiji, Ireland, and Costa Rica.

In January, Steve had a stroke. He has been working very hard and is making slow progress. He was previously in another nursing home but wasn't able to get his medications on time, which was really important with his condition. Kathy said, "There, they said 'no' to everything. When you ask for something here, they say 'sure' and in two minutes it's done."

Before Steve moved to the Cottages, they visited other homes but found residents lined up in wheelchairs with their heads down. Kathy said, “I can’t put him in any of those.” “When we visited here, it was like in the movies when the music goes off. This is it!” “Every elder person should have this kind of option.” “I don’t like leaving him but I don’t feel bad about him being here.”

One of Steve’s favorite aspects of the cottage is all the natural light. Recently, he was able to cook his chili in the kitchen. He also really enjoys happy hour. Kathy likes that they ask her to join them for meals. She said, “The people who work here are magnificent. There’s nothing bad about it.”



*Large windows provide natural lighting and a view of the enclosed courtyard*



*Community Nurse Leader Paula Lee*

Community Nurse Leader Paula Lee was born and raised in St. Louis. She has three sons and three grandchildren. She was 33-years-old when she became a nurse as a second career. She worked in other settings for 19 years before starting in long-term care. She worked in mid-Missouri for ten years. “I used to say I would never work in long-term care but this is where I belong.”

She worked on culture change in other organizations and said she had to be part of a Green House. “You have better clinical outcomes with a culture change model. It really works!” “Nothing impedes residents’ self-determination except staff pre-conceived notions. That is where training comes in.” Staff buy-in when they see the residents’ lives improve. They then encourage and support choice, rather than hinder it. “We are partners in their homes, not people doing things to them.”

“Teaching self-led teams is hard. It isn’t something they are normally taught. People are used to the charge nurse telling them what to do.”

“When you walk into a cottage at 7:30, nobody is up. Most residents choose to get up between 8:30 and 10:30. They sleep because it is quiet.” They make conscious choices about skin products and briefs so they don’t have to interrupt sleep. She recently worked through the night and only two call lights went off the whole night.

“It is the most rewarding job I’ve had. It is also the hardest. We are working against accepted norms. You can’t train it and walk away. We are constantly trying to keep the dragon away from the door. The dragon is the old way.”

The biggest difference between here and the traditional nursing home is the relationships between elders and care partners.