



*Chateau Girardeau*

In February 2014, I visited Chateau Girardeau in Cape Girardeau. Chateau Girardeau is a not-for-profit Continuing Care Retirement Community that was founded by the Presbyterian Church. The 40-acre campus includes 37 individual Independent Living homes, 99 Independent Living apartments, a 55-resident Assisted Living Home, and a 75-resident Skilled Nursing Home. The skilled nursing home includes a 16-resident short term rehabilitation neighborhood and 20-resident dementia neighborhood.



*Front Lobby*



*Independent Living Homes*



*Administrative Director of Nursing Wendy Boren, RN*

Administrative Director of Nursing Wendy Boren showed me around. I learned that Wendy grew up on a large farm in Central Illinois, where her family raised cattle, horses, and chickens. She attended Southern Illinois, Carbondale, where she obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science and Ag Communications. After graduating from college, she worked in the agriculture industry. She later worked as an Editor for a book publishing company, which is what she was doing at the time of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

Reflecting on the attacks, she decided she "wanted to do something that made a difference." Having had all of her grandparents, four-great-grandparents, and one great-great-grandparent as she grew up, she had been greatly influenced by elders. She decided to go to nursing school and specialize in gerontology. She now considers working with elders her "calling."

While in college, she asked a lot of questions about gerontology and learned about the Culture Change movement from a professor. She sought out and became involved in the movement and now serves as Co-Regional Representative for the Southeast region of Missouri's Culture Change Coalition, [MC5](#) (Missouri Coalition Celebrating Care Continuum Change).



Since working at Chateau Girardeau, she has served as Rehab Director, Director of Nursing, and now Administrative Director of Nursing. Changes that have taken place since she has worked there include removing the dining room doors, so that it is always open. Meal choices have been expanded and staff members cook for residents anytime they want something. Frequent special requests include espressos or milk shakes. The "get-up" and bathing lists are gone. Residents now go to bed and get up when they choose and receiving bathing assistance based on their choices. Their restorative program has also grown and residents are now more active.

Caregivers are consistently assigned to care for the same residents so that they develop relationships and are better able meet their needs because they know them well.

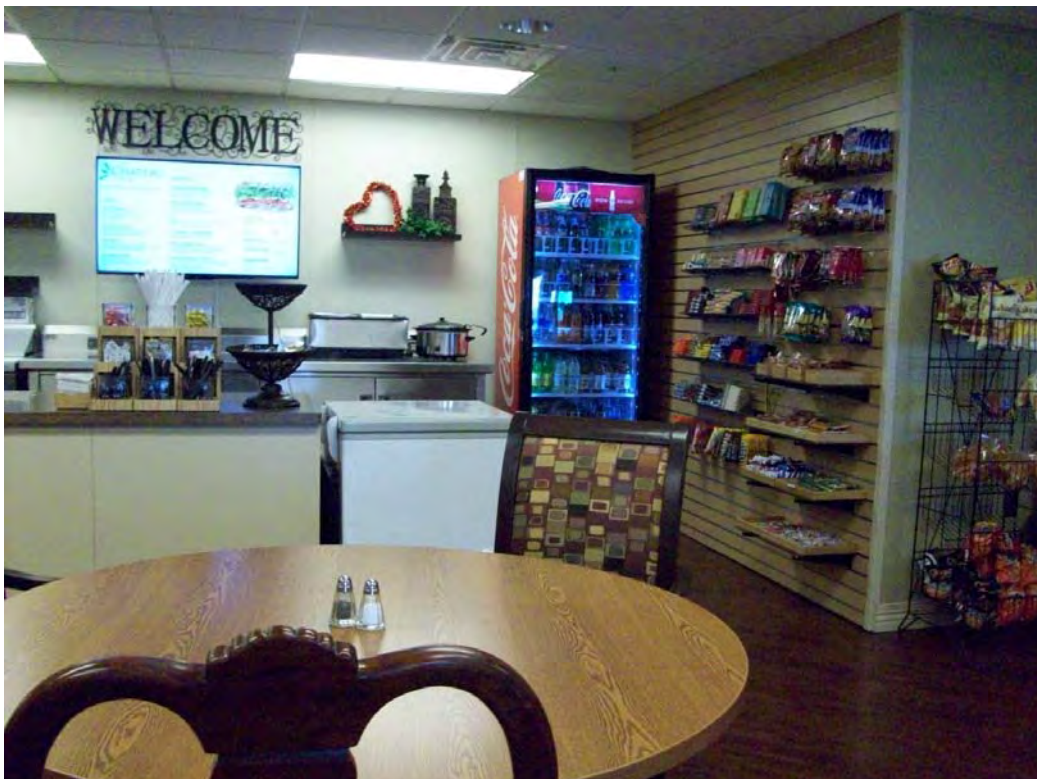
There are many amenities and resources available on-site, including a medical clinic, library, two beauty shops, a bar, a bistro/gift shop, and a bank. There are several household type laundry rooms, living rooms, dining rooms, and kitchenettes available for residents and their visitors. WIFI is available throughout and there are community computers with internet access.



*Bistro/Gift Shop*



*Bistro/Gift Shop*



*Bistro/Gift Shop*



*On-site bank*





*One of several household laundries available to residents and their families*

Something that I found to be most impressive is that there are seven guest apartments available for visitors. Visitors of residents who are dying stay for free. Two nights are free for guests from out-of-town. There is a small fee for additional nights, but it is still less expensive and more convenient than a hotel.

Both semi-private and private apartments/rooms are available. The rehabilitation neighborhood has only private rooms. Residents are encouraged to move in personal furniture and decorate as they choose. They have a special care neighborhood that serves residents with dementia; however, it is not locked or alarmed. Residents wear special bracelets that send a signal to staff when they approach a door that exits to the outdoors.

During our walk, we ran into Buddy, a big brown dog who spends his days at the Chateau. He obviously knew where he was going. He greeted us, but didn't hang around long enough for me to get a good photo of him.



*An Assisted Living Apartment*

There are many opportunities for residents to stay active. In addition to the busy organized activity schedule, the activity room is always open. There is a wheelchair accessible wildflower trail through the woods on the property. Many residents enjoy participating in maintaining the gardens, including several who are master gardeners. Others enjoy working on projects in the woodworking shop.





*Handicap accessible wildflower trail*

A lot of University Students provide volunteer services. They also have a special partnership and frequent interactions with the students from Franklin Elementary School. Not long before my visit, the students had visited and given the residents Valentine's Day cards. It is not a one-way relationship though; residents really enjoy giving to the students by holding a school supply drive for them. Another favorite is when the [Teen Challenge Choir](#) comes to perform. Several independent living residents also do volunteer work in the nursing home.

They have open dining hours and residents may eat in any of the dining rooms. Neighborhood kitchenettes are available for residents and families' and snacks are available at all times at no cost.



*One of several neighborhood kitchenettes*





*A neighborhood dining room*

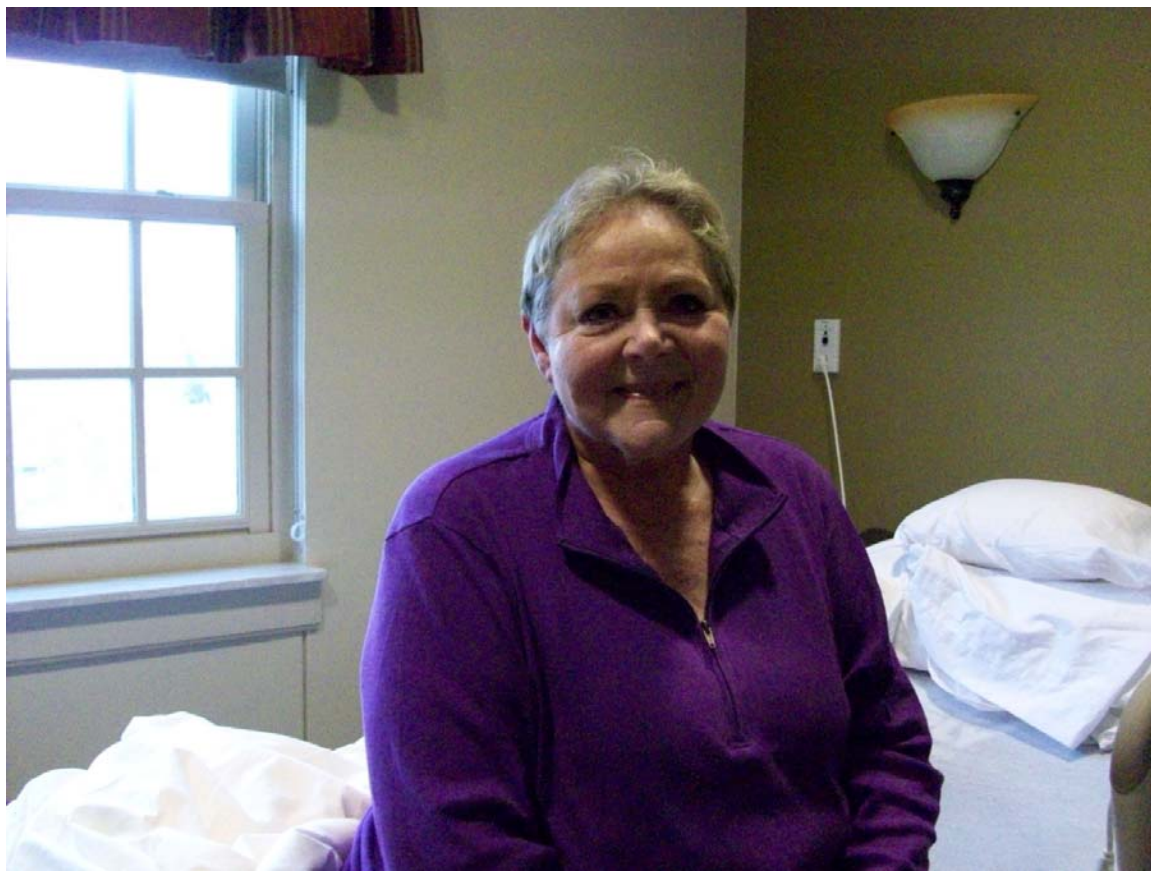
To maintain a peaceful homey environment, they utilize a silent call system. Overhead paging is only utilized for fire drills and emergencies.

When a resident's death is anticipated, they ensure he or she has a private room. Hospice services are arranged if desired. Guest rooms and hospitality carts are provided for visitors. The chapel and a minister are available. A resident who is a lay minister also often provides support. They have special end-of-life prayers with residents who wish to have them. They also provide beautician services in the resident's room. After a death, staff members line the hallways as the resident is taken to the hearse. They also hold memorial services if it was the resident's desire.





*A neighborhood living room*



*Short-Term Rehabilitation Resident Laura Holloway*

Laura Holloway was recovering from back surgery in the rehab neighborhood. Ms. Holloway was born and raised in Lilburn, MO, where she "grew up picking cotton." Her father was a carpenter and her mother took work wherever she could. She also has one brother and one sister.

Ms. Holloway had herself once worked as an aide in a nursing home. She was just 17-years-old and she and one other aide were the only staff on duty on the 11pm to 7am shift, caring for 50 residents. The other aide, who was not a nurse, passed medications and gave shots. She later worked the 5am to 1pm shift and even though she had no cooking experience or training, her duties included cooking breakfast for the residents. She said the most significant difference today is well trained staff.

After getting married, she moved to Memphis, TN, where she was a hair dresser. She later lived in Dallas, TX, and worked for Aflac. She moved back to Missouri in 2001 to take care of her mother. She now operates an animal rescue, which was being manned by volunteers during her absence. She continued involvement in the day-to-day operations by phone and computer.

Ms. Holloway has had two previous stays at Chateau Girardeau for hip and knee replacements and is already planning her next stay, after she gets her other hip replaced. The caregivers know

she likes to get up at 4:30 and go for her therapy at 5:00 in the mornings, so they have her cup of coffee ready for her when she gets up. She said, "They are just a great, great bunch. They accommodate you in every way." She also said, "If the time comes that I have to go to a nursing home, I don't know what I will do if I can't come here." "I love the people here."



*Katie Culver, CNA*

CNA Katie Culver said she is shy until she gets to know you. I guess she got to know me pretty quickly; we had a great conversation. Katie grew up in Cape Girardeau with her parents and brother. She is very proud of her three-year-old son. She is also pretty fond of her one-year-old Labrador Retriever. She loves spending time with her family, especially outdoors. Some of her favorite pastimes are playing baseball with her son, camping, and floating. She also likes to shop.

Katie has worked at the Chateau for three years and loves what she does. Perhaps some of her compassion for others comes from having faced adversity herself. She was diagnosed with glaucoma when she was only two-years-old and has undergone 21 eye surgeries since.



Katie previously worked for another long-term care home. She especially likes that everybody is happy at the Chateau and they have great teamwork. She also praised the fact that they work with her so that she is able to attend important events with her son.

Katie's duties include serving as hostess in the dining room, answering call lights, accompanying residents to doctors' appointments, and van scheduling. She wants to continue her career in long-term care and plans to go back to school and become a nurse.

We discussed some of the changes she has seen over the past three years. The most significant improvement has been in food service. They now have restaurant style dining with more choices offered. There are two entre choices at meals, plus a long list of menu items that are always available, and a variety of desserts. She especially likes the "theme meals." In October, they had German food during Oktoberfest. The theme around Valentine's Day was "Love in Paris" with French food being served. The residents also enjoy hanging out in the dining room after meals and visiting over coffee.



*Cappuccino Machine in the Library*

Like many homes that have embraced culture change, Chateau Girardeau stays full and has a waiting list.