



*Bishop Spencer Place*

In July 2013, I visited Bishop Spencer Place in Kansas City, which includes a 57-resident Medicare/Medicaid certified skilled nursing home, 40-resident assisted living home, and 114-resident independent living home.



*Courtyard/garden*

Administrator Melissa Steck showed me around and told me about the many changes they have been making to remove institutional features and improve the quality of life for residents. White tile floors have been replaced with home style flooring. Bathing rooms are being remodeled. Resident rooms are being updated with fresh paint, new TVs, and new beds with wooden headboards and footboards.



*Resident room*

WIFI is available throughout. There are also community computers with internet access available. There is no overhead paging. The assisted living and independent living have residential style laundries, which are also available to the nursing home residents and their family members if they wish to use them. Cable television and phone service is provided for all residents. There is even a café and bar.





*Bar*

They have been granted exceptions to state regulatory requirements related to the nurses' station and call system. The large institutional nurses' station was removed and the audible hard-wired call system and lights above room doors were replaced with a wireless pager system that directly notifies caregivers of the location of residents needing assistance.

The assisted living and independent living homes have all private rooms/apartments. The nursing home has both private and semi-private rooms. They hope to someday have all private rooms. The semi-private rooms are designed so that both residents have access to windows. There are no restrictions on residents' personal furniture or decorations. Cots are provided for visitors who wish to spend the night. Arrangements have also been made with nearby hotels for discounted rates.

Residents direct their own lives. They go to bed and get up when they choose. Some assisted living and independent living residents have personal pets. Administrator Steck said they are not opposed to nursing home residents also having pets, but nobody has asked.



*Quick-fill Whirlpool tub with built-in TV and scales*

Staff members have consistent assignments. Residents are provided with bathing assistance based on their preferences. They get the type of bath they want, when they want it. The newly remodeled bathing rooms include satellite radio, towel warmers, wall heaters, and quick filling tubs with built in TVs and scales. Some residents enjoy videos from their families while they bathe.



*Dining room*

Each meal is served for two hours. Samples of the daily specials are on display in the dining rooms. Tables are set with table cloths, linen napkins (institutional clothing protectors are no longer used), vases filled with flowers, nice new colored dishes, and menus. The menus include several daily specials and many other choices that are always available. Additionally, snacks are also available at all times at no extra cost. Residents can have personal refrigerators if they wish or they can use the community refrigerator.





*Resident Martha Ball*

I had the pleasure of visiting with 99-year-old resident Martha Ball. When I introduced myself to her and asked how she was doing, she said, "I don't check anymore. I might not like what I find." Ms. Ball grew up on a farm in Benedict, Kansas where her family farmed river bottom ground and raised cattle. She is a Kansas University graduate and Nutritionist. She married in 1945.

She and her husband moved to Bishop Spencer Place independent living together. He has since passed away and she now resides in the nursing home. She refuses to call Bishop Spencer Place a nursing home though; it is a "retirement community." She said "nursing homes used to be a disgrace to our culture." She brought her mother to her home and cared for her until she was dying so that she wouldn't have to live in a nursing home. She said Bishop Spencer Place staff are kind and do their best to provide for her. She described herself as a "lazy bum." She enjoys watching TV and her window.



*Resident Frank Victor's duck decoys displayed in his apartment*

I also visited with 77-year-old assisted living resident Frank Victor. Mr. Victor grew up in Minnesota and attended college at the University of Wisconsin. He told me about deer and turkey hunting and showed me his duck decoy collection and paintings, including a painting of Mount McKinley, which he painted after returning home from climbing it.





Resident Frank Victor's painting of Mt. McKinley (unfortunately, I photographed reflections in the glass too.)

Mr. Victor has lived at Bishop Spencer place for about a year. He said, "Everything they do here is first class." "Everybody tries real hard to serve us and they do a nice job." He enjoys exercising in the therapy room, sitting on the porch, and serving on the resident council.



*CNA Carronda Walker*

CNA Carronda Walker took time from her duties to speak with me too. Ms. Walker was born and raised in Kansas City. She decided she wanted to be a CNA after taking care of her ill grandmother in her family home. She received her certification through a Vocational Technical School while in high school. She has two children and is recently married.

Ms. Walker has worked at Bishop Spencer Place for seven years and has seen many changes since she has been there. The nurses' station has been removed. They have three vans and two cars they use to take residents where they want to go. Church services are held in the chapel, but they also take many residents out to Church. Residents move in more personal property. Dining hours have been expanded and they now order meals from menus with many options. They also sleep as late as they want.

Caregivers are able to take the time to talk to residents and really get to know them. They call them what they want to be called. They learn their preferences and honor them. These changes have resulted in the residents being more rested and comfortable. Their appetites have improved and they are eating better. They really feel at home now. Ms. Walker said, "It's all about what they want." "It is nice to be able to get to know them."





*Living room*



*On-site bank*





*Chapel*