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Marian Oakland West opens new life style for elderly

By LORRAINE MCLENN

Sister Rita Ossowski, S.S.J., is on the countdown now, running toward Oct. 1 when the first residents will come to live at Marian Oakland West, a unique compound designed for the elderly.

Sister Rita works out of office in St. Clare of Assisi Roman Catholic Church rectory where she can see construction going on of the campus designed complex at 3525 1st Mile in Farmington.

She's been here since May working with an ecumenical board made up of 24 persons, who come from almost as many churches, within the Southfield-Farmington Vicariate. Thomas Frommeyer, director of social services in Southfield, is president of the board.

"The home is designed for both privacy

and interaction," Sister Rita says. "If you want privacy, you can have it. If you want or need company, there are people around and placed to meet."

MARIAN OAKLAND WEST is patterned after Kundig Center, located on Lawton and Ash Avenues in Detroit, a center for seniors. St. Clare's Father Joseph Drogowski describes it as "never planned, but just evolved out of a series of incidents."

What evolved, he said, was not complex. Rather, it was so simple that its simplicity caused a stumbling block for some in solving housing for the elderly.

The campus concept offers private one-floor living quarters with individual bath and shower and private entryways.

Family-style meals, however, are served in common. Spacious central recreational and lounge facilities are much by covered walkways. Weekly maid service is furnished, and parking facilities are available for those with cars.

Virginia Rensel, of Farmington Hills, is chairperson of the board's activities committee, whose job it is to initiate social, cultural and educational activities for the residents, both at Marian and in the community.

Mary Wayne and Loretta Conway, both of Farmington Hills, head up the transportation committee on the board, answering needs for shopping trips, visits to the doctor, or whatever is requested.

SISTER RITA, with a background of working with the elderly in programs in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, said she is "completely sold on the campus living concept." Of her visits to Kundig and centers patterned after Kundig, she says, "What I found was very happy people."

A good part of her time now is taken up with screening applicants for the first 36 persons who will move into Marian's Phase I in the fall. "Finding those who are going to be happy with this kind of life style."

She emphasizes, "This is not a nursing home, not a place for sick people, yet it is not a place for the totally independent."

'Its main purpose is to encourage interaction on all fronts with room and space for social, educational and recreational things to happen.'

—Sister Rita, administrator for Marian Oakland West

Requirements are that residents be beyond 62 years of age, able to care for themselves, be in good mental and physical health with no unusual dietary restrictions or requirements. There is no medical personnel on the premises. Having above a minimum income is not a deterrent. Applicants are generally recommended by a minister or a priest, but religion is not even mentioned on the application. We don't ask what church they go to, or even if they go to a church," Sister Rita said.

"The building was put up with Archdiocesan money, but the race, color and creed factor stops right there," she said.

MARIAN OAKLAND WEST was funded under a grant from the William A. Ryan Trust Fund created specifically to be used for this type project. Several are either new in use, or if the planning stage to be built in six counties of southeastern Michigan.

"Its main purpose," Sister Rita says, is "to encourage interaction on all fronts with room and space for social, educational and recreational things to happen. The entire concept prevents isolation. Eating is a social action. Nothing tastes good when you are eating alone."

Father Drogowski believes the need for more of this type of housing is "universal." He points to actuarial charts which show that persons living now can expect 25 years of post-retirement living coupled with today's life style which has outmoded the family which absorbed its elderly.

Phase I of the home will consist of three units, two containing living quarters and

the third housing a lounge, a dining room and necessary office and service facilities. Each residential unit will have 24 rooms and two apartments.

MARIAN'S BOARD of directors, have just recently formed the Century Club, established for those who wish to assist financially in providing low-cost housing for the elderly. The Ryan trust is limited by its charter to providing the funds to build and furnish the home. Funds needed to make it fully operational must come from other sources.

The board of directors finance committee is headed by Eugene Ziemet, of Southfield, who also serves as vice president of the board, and Robert Whal, of Farmington Hills.

Secretary for the board is Loretta Abel, and treasurer is Ed Whiting, both of Farmington.

Charles Galowski, of Farmington Hills, heads the application the publicly committee.

Richard McDewitt, of Farmington Hills and Michael Kenny, of Southfield, serve on the audit committee with the treasurer.

The kitchen committee is headed by John Anhalt, and the house and apartment furnishings committee is headed by Jeanne Sallot, both of Farmington Hills.

Other members at large are Nancy Bates, Lee McDewitt, Rev. Meredith Mosbauer, Dr. James Remmel, Yvonne Singer and Mary Alice Whiting, all of Farmington Hills, India Downing, of Madison Heights, and Ed Wagoner, of Grosse Pointe Woods.

SISTER RITA OSSOWSKI, S.S.J.



The artist's conception of Marian Oakland West shows the campus-style complex as it will appear in its entirety. Phase I of the complex will include the building pictured in the center, containing a lounge, dining room, offices and service facilities, and two living quarter units running at right angles forming three quarters of a square.

Mister Rogers knows what charms children

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Part of Fred Rogers' devastating charm is making children feel really loved.

With perfect seriousness, he announced to all the children in the audience at a premiere performance of "SummerSnow." "You helped us make this musical, you know. There's only one person just like you in the whole world. We all like you just the way you are."

His voice is kind, warm, firm. No wonder the boys and girls crowded around the stage door following the afternoon show to talk with their idol.

I joined the crowd around the stage door, later went backstage and onto the stage where Mister Rogers was

still surrounded by admirers.

"What did he think of that day's second premier performance?" (The hour-long show was presented both in the morning and afternoon). "I'm very pleased," he replied in his mild manner. "I think they've done a phenomenal job getting it together."

"All the sets fit in one van," he explained. Following the 11-day run in Detroit the show was expected to be booked into other major cities. Contracts are still being signed.

Among other celebrants on the stage was David DiChiera of Bloomfield Hills, artistic director of the Music Hall, who produced the show. "We gave this all the care you would a Broadway production," he said. "To the charisma of Fred Rogers on televi-

sion, we gave an added dimension on stage."

"We hope the show will be a classic."

The Music Hall has committed itself to presenting a broad range of cultural activities for the whole family. "SummerSnow" was our debut with children's theater," DiChiera said. "I feel we started at the top with children's theater of the highest artistic merit. It's a really elegant, elaborate production."

He said the cast was the best from Detroit and all over the country. "In performing arts, we want to do productions for all age groups. The involvement of Mister Rogers is a unique contribution to entertainment."



Tennis classes under way

Tennis classes start this week on North Farmington High School courts, sponsored by Farmington Community Center in cooperation with Farmington Area Recreation Commission. Lisa Williams is a student of Norman Staniszewski, one of three instructors who teach both daytime and evening sessions for players in all levels of expertise. Registrations are being taken now for the current classes, as well as a new series of classes set to begin the week of Aug. 2. All registrations and payment must be made at the center.

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