

Senior day care centers — an alternative to institutions

By Elaine McDermott
special writer

Mrs. McDermott is a Southfield resident, a gerontology major at Madonna College and a member of the Michigan Association of Senior Day Care Centers. For more than five years, she has been a patient advocate for Citizens for Better Care. Guest columns by other readers are welcome.

"New beginnings" is a term being used nationally to help ease the financial situation in our country.

New beginnings aptly describes the alternative offered to senior citizens living in a community where senior day care is available. Unfortunately, most individuals don't understand what senior day care means.

Senior day care is a generic term that applies to a variety of services from active rehabilitation to social and health-related care.

Based on services performed, various terms include day care, day treatment, day health care, psychiatric day treatment, partial hospitalization and day hospital care.

Nationally, more than 600 senior day care programs exist and the number is rapidly growing. In Michigan, however, to my knowledge, there are only 11 such programs in Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Flint, Grand Rapids, Hamtramck, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Manistee, Marquette and Detroit.

IN OAKLAND County, no comparable services are offered to our elderly. Yet living in our community today are countless elderly persons who are at high risk. They are unable to adequately meet the needs of daily living without some third party assistance.

One option being investigated by a number of communities as a viable alternative to institutionalization is senior day care.

In some cases, social models are used to care for seniors living in extended family homes with loved ones. Respite care, in addition to offering a congenial, pleasant atmosphere, also relieves close family members of constant 24-hour care.

When these centers are close to senior centers where many activities are offered for recreational diversity, it provides a previously homebound person the opportunity to mingle and share friendships with well peers. This can be therapeutic.

BY USING the services of local hospitals and medical personnel, the medical model helps to closely monitor at-risk elderly whose health is deteriorating. Preventive care then can alert the elderly and their families to impending physical ailments or disabilities.

Possible services for senior day care programs might be reality orientation and retraining in activities of daily living for stroke victims, recreational activities for mental stimulation, intellectual stimulation through educational experience, physical exercise and a better-rounded nutritional foundation.

The ultimate achievement would be maintenance of living standards by allowing people to live out their waning years with dignity and pride. Quality of life is a well-cherished American tradition and should continue to be high on our list of priorities.

From a cost containment perspective, day care is extremely useful in holding the line when compared to institutionalization, foster home care and chore services in the home.

The average cost of nursing home care in our state is \$11,000. Foster care placements cost approximately \$6,000 and in-home chore service averages \$3,600 annually. Day care can be offered for \$3,013 a year based on present available data.

Existing national programs have been grassroots oriented, because influential people have seen a need and acted to respond in a positive way.

We cannot avoid addressing the problems faced by our mushrooming elderly population. The time is now for us to be to make this concept a reality.

'Nationally, more than 600 senior day care programs exist, and the number is rapidly growing. In populous Oakland County, no comparable services are offered to our elderly. Yet living in our community today are countless elderly persons who are at high risk.'

— Elaine McDermott

Town names commercial and oriental

By Robert Woodring
special writer

A city in Pennsylvania was named after a candy bar. It is called Hershey.

A town in Iowa shares its name with a refrigerator. It is called Amana.

Tarzana, Calif., is named for the fictitious ape man.

Michigan could easily have the only town in the United States named for a shopping center. That's Westland.

The J.L. Hudson Co. chose this western Detroit suburb as its site for a second major shopping center to follow the pattern of the first of its kind in the southeast corner of Southfield, Northland Center.

Hudson's development prompted Nankin Township leaders to call for a vote of cityhood to protect the property's benefits. This isn't so unusual when you consider that other cities exist as by-products of race tracks or industrial expansion.

BEFORE IT was named for a mall, Westland had other origins shared with a couple of other Detroit suburbs.

Communities such as Pekin (now Dearborn), Canton, and Nankin (Westland) were all named for a Chinese counterpart, probably a result of British trade during the early 1800s. During that time, China was opened to trade with the West, prior to the Opium Wars.

Despite the Revolutionary War, the Michigan Territory was staunchly British until the War of 1812. When we celebrate the Fourth of July, it might mean a free holiday today, but Michiganians were loyal British subjects when Easterners signed the declaration of freedom.

During the 1825 expansion, encouraged by the opening of the Erie Canal and the auctioning of land, Detroiters probably communicated with British relatives and benefited from the Chinese trade.

CANTON was settled in 1825 by Perry Sheldon, David Cady and Childs Downer, becoming Sheldon's Corners.

Dearborn had been called Ten Eyck, Bucklin and Pekin before being called Dearborn after the 1812 commander, Gen. Henry Dearborn.

Since most histories are seemingly recorded only after white settlers open a territory, the only major reference to the earliest inhabitants is the city of Pontiac (Chief Pontiac) and an automobile namesake.

Redford wasn't official until Azarias Bell arrived



in 1818. The Shiawassee, Ann Arbor and Grand River trails passed through or near this fording of the Rouge River, thus the evolution of the name Red (rouge) and Ford (for of the river).

A post office was assigned to this area and was first called North Pekin in January 1833. Five months later, the name became Redford.

RESIDENTS OF particular areas bring with them heritages of towns.

Wars create generals suggesting village names. Politicians seeking governmental favors might suggest names for political leaders.

Towns being named for world trade centers are not unusual when you notice that there are towns called Peru and Brazil in Indiana, and Cairo, Cuba and Havana in Illinois.

Since the Chippewa and Potawatomi nations have been blown away by civilization like the once-mountainous dunes of Lake Michigan, all we have left are sprawling suburbs named for the distant Chinese dynasties.

The writer is a freelancer and former Observer staff photographer.



Property taxes not fair for some cities

Homeowners like to complain about the heavy burden of property taxes.

The grumbling increased as the debate heated up over Proposal A, the property tax relief plan voters rejected by a 3-to-1 margin last Tuesday.

But a review of the property tax burden isn't complete unless there is serious study about the inequities of property taxation — both as it applies to those who pay and those in local government who collect.

The U.S. Constitution guarantees that no one shall be denied equal protection of the law. But it is clear among neighboring suburbs that some cities with a wealthy industrial and commercial tax base have more protection than other communities.

To get into a comparison, let's take a look at how the current property tax system affects homeowners and how much public services they received through property taxes.

For purposes of example, let's assume that identical houses in different communities have the same local assessment and state equalized valuation.

That would mean two homeowners with the same size home and amenities and the same millage rate would pay identical property tax bills.

But what do they get for their taxes?

THE DIFFERENCES come about through the development of business and industry — or lack of it — at a certain point in time.

A good example is the Westland-Livonia growth pattern.

At one point in the 1950s, Westland (then known as Nankin Township) had a larger population than Livonia. But the housing boom after the Korean War helped Livonia's population grow a little more than Westland's.

The main difference between them was that Livonia also received industrial growth — four major General Motors plants, two large Ford motor facilities, several supermarket warehouses and hundreds of smaller plants along the railroad.

Westland's major taxpayer is Westland Shopping Center.

A few miles away, Garden City notes it is the home of the first Kmart in the country. It also has a modest industrial park — and that's about it for a property tax base.

In dollars and cents, Livonia's property tax revenue is more than double Westland's, and about five times greater than Garden City's.

From the homeowner's point of view, it means that one mill (\$1 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation) generates \$1.2 million in Livonia, about \$500,000 in Westland and \$250,000 in Garden City.

So Garden City residents, with little industrial property to tax, pay a relatively high millage rate for city services but get a lot less for their money.

AS FOR city administration: Livonia has a planning department of 11 persons, including seven professionals. Westland has only two professionals on staff.

Garden City didn't have a full-time planner until 15 months ago. He has no assistant, does his own drafting work, and shares a secretary.

PROPOSAL A would have represented a move in the right direction, sharing the cost of the cities among all of Michigan's taxpayers.

But city and school officials were upset because such equity would mean a big drop in revenues for their institutions.

Local leaders prefer to control the destinies of their own communities, even if it means struggling along with unequal sources of money.

A heart filled with poetry

"Writing is to prose as dancing is to walking." Ron Brasch said that. I'm not sure he said it first. But Brasch, who writes advertising copy and poetry, means it's harder to dance well than to walk well. And for sure it's too hard to write well.

Brasch's goal is to use words in conjunction which each other as they've never before been seen. To make commonplace language unique is the very core of communication, he believes.

My secret ambition is to publish a novel, a short story or a poem for posterity. I love the newspaper business. But agonizing over a 20-inch story and visualizing it wrapped around yesterday's garbage can be discouraging. Ah, the woes of fleeting fame.

It must be sheer euphoria to have reached the pinnacle in life where an adoring public clamors for your every thought, fantasy and conviction. Of course, nobody gives a damn about your opinions unless you're published or have otherwise distinguished yourself.

In my dreams, I see rap audiences held spell-bound while I dissertate on such subjects as why I hate rutabagas and adore Robert Redford. If I could only write my memoirs before I become famous.

AMONG MY memoirs are a bunch of poems I wrote about such commonplace subjects as bringing up kids, taking in a stray dog and fighting with a bróge partner.

When I read the literary gems to my friends, they shook their heads in commiseration and agreed, "How true, how true." These well-meaners urged me to mail my rhymes to women's magazines to make the world a better, wiser place.

So like a mother hen, I sent my tender little fledglings out into the cold, cruel world of publishers where I feared my babies would be booted to the bottom of wastebaskets buried under cigar butts. But they weren't. They came home to roost along with rejection slips.

How sad it is that women everywhere are deprived of sharing my universal thoughts, nodding their heads and saying "How true, how true." But I guess I didn't achieve the uniqueness to which Brasch aspires.

The 34-year-old poet from Farmington Hills, for instance, got an inspiration when he was traveling on an island along the coast of France. How can I be inspired when I'm driving from Southfield to Birmingham in my daily travels?



ANYWAY, BRASCH saw an old church and had an image of a deserted church in northern Michigan. He wrote the poem, "Christen," which starts, "We find this place in late summer when crops go fallow."

And on one New Year's Eve, Brasch wrote a poem about grandmothers shopping in a supermarket. They were fondling the lettuce and talking about their grandchildren as though that's all they had. That is all they have, these women who were once young and desirable, Brasch said.

That's depressing but it's sure making the commonplace unique. It's like Brasch's poem about a photograph which captures a happy moment, never to be recaptured except in memory.

If fate decrees that I will never be a rich and famous writer, I take heart in a poem by Peter Altenberg:

"I never dreamed of being Shakespeare or Goethe. And I never expected to hold the great mirror of truth up before the world. I dreamed only of being a little pocket mirror, the sort that a woman can carry in her purse. One that reflects small blemishes and some great beauties when held close enough to the heart."