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— Karen Underwood, L.P.N.



Medicaid patients 'a different reward'

By Diane Gale
staff writer

THERE ARE few frills at West Trail Nursing Home.

It's a small facility with 46 residents in a building on Ann Arbor Trail in Plymouth which staffers admit "doesn't look that good."

Medicaid pays for 40 indigent patients. Less money comes in — especially compared to nursing homes where the majority of patients are private pay.

But the staff loves it and the patients.

LIZ CLOS, a registered nurse, took a \$4.50 hourly pay cut from a hospital when she started at West Trail in 1986 because there are rewards, she said, that aren't gauged in money.

"The hospital was real rewarding, but there's a different kind of reward here. The people here are grateful for the crumbs."

Hospital patients think they're in a hotel and are less content, she said. In the nursing home, they don't expect a lot and appreciate even the smallest favor, endearment or token.

One "perk" for a nurse is a patient sad to see her leave on Fridays and happy on Mondays when she returns.

ANOTHER IS a kiss on the cheek and a "true, genuine thank you" for opening a packet of sugar, said Karen Underwood, a licensed practical nurse who moved here from Houston where she

worked at a hospital.

She tried to find a similar job in Michigan, but it wasn't easy, so she started applying at nursing homes. That was almost three years ago.

Now she wouldn't work anywhere else.

"It (hospital work) is too much hassle and pressure . . . and here it's a family-like atmosphere. You get to know everything about the patients."

"It's nice. They're like a grandmother. To the elderly this is their home. We regard this as their home, and we're here like helpmates at their home."

CLOS SAID she tries to instill this philosophy during orientation programs for nurses' aides.

"I tell the aides this is the patient's home, and for most this will be their last home, and to treat them like this is their home."

"You get attached (to the residents) and after two weeks you're hook, line and sinker. They're like your family."

Since the facility is comparatively small, there are no set visiting hours. Family are allowed to take patients home, and residents are encouraged to bring furniture and other possessions from their homes, she said.

The women praise the volunteer input from the community as well as residents' families giving their time during functions.

"We wouldn't work in a home that didn't provide quality care," Clos said, nodding toward Underwood.



(Above left) Nurse Liz Clos reviews prescriptions. (Above right) Peggy Scott receives medication from Clos. (Above) With Tina Slatina's help, nurse Karen Underwood wheels Russell Burns to lunch.