

Suburban Life

Lorraine McClish editor/477-5450



Thursday, May 26, 1988 O&E

(F)18

Older Americans

Independent and busy is the way of life for residents in Marion Oakland-West

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

ELAINÉ McDermott said she was observing Older Americans Month by adhering to its motto, "Life is Worth Celebrating."

"I'm celebrating the family we've created here," McDermott said of the residents in Marion Oakland-West. "I'm celebrating independent living for the 64-to-94-year-olds who make up our family and we have at least half-a-dozen in their 90's who are

doing just that."

McDermott is administrator for the complex of buildings that sit on seven acres of ground adjacent to St. Clare Catholic Church. A passerby could easily miss it. And once into the complex, the atmosphere turns rural. Wildlife surrounds the well-tended lawns. The complex is far enough away from the traffic on 10 Mile and Middlebelt so the birds can be heard. Critters scamper across the gardens.

Some of the residents are out working in those gardens. Some are

out for a stroll. Some are sitting on porches chatting with one another. Some are in the lounge waiting for a fourth for bridge. Some are waiting for a car to pick them up for a day's outing. Some are in the beauty shop.

Some are in their own apartments. "But who's got time to stay in their rooms when there's so much to do?" Lucy Harper asked. "I own a recliner but I can't remember the last time I had a chance to put my feet up."

HARPER IS president of Marion Oakland-West's resident council, which "iron's out any problems that come up," she said, and paves the way for any special events or activities the residents choose to plan for themselves.

Harper, 78, said she thinks she is typical of those who choose to live there. She is an industrial nurse by profession and is on call as a relief worker when she's needed.

She reached a time in her life when she knew she was going to have to make a change in her living accommodations, and sought out what was going to be best for her. She has never been sorry about the decision.

"We have small rooms here. There aren't too many things you can bring with you from the house you once had, but who needs all that stuff? The rooms are big enough to give you privacy when you need it. There are enough people around to give you any kind of social activity you want when you need that," she said.

EACH OF the 92 units in Marion Oakland-West has its own private

entryway. The homes surround a central building that houses the administration offices, the dining room, a help-yourself shop stocked with toiletries and common items needed for housecleaning, and several lounges that allow for private parties as well as open gatherings.

There are no aides, no nurses, no one to call on regularly for assistance with bathing, for example.

"These people are all living independently," McDermott said. "They plan any joint activities they want through the resident council. If they have a problem or a suggestion, they take it to the resident council."

MARION OAKLAND-WEST is one of six campus-style complexes built with \$12 million left to the Archdiocese of Detroit by William Ryan.

It opened here, on land donated by St. Clare Church, 12 years ago. Its residents are now paying \$325 a month rental.

"That includes three meals a day. So there's always a long waiting list," McDermott said.

The residents are predominantly Catholic because of the proximity to the church, but there is no discrimination in rentals on that long waiting list.

"We are somewhat of a League of Nations here," McDermott said. "We have residents of all faiths and nationalities and backgrounds and professions. Some are from around here because they want to live near to their families, but our residents were born all over the world."



Connie Cair, who grew up on a farm in Italy, has been planting and gardening all her life. She's carved out one corner on the grounds of Marion Oakland-West as her territory to continue indulging in one of her favorite pastimes. She made the landscaping plan, laid the brick border and is ready to transplant ferns.



Lucy Harper was able to bring only one piece of her own furniture with her when she moved into Marion Oakland-West. She chose a secretary that was given to her by her brothers and sisters when she retired.

Photos by Tom Arnett



Bob Bartel, whose enthusiasm is called the mainstay of the support group, sets the tone for fellow stroke victims on their roads back to recovery.

The Kan-Doo's

Where members are their own motivators and therapists

By Lorraine McClish
staff writer

BOB BARTEL presides over the Tuesday morning meeting of about 50.

He announces that the Blue Pigs will be furnishing the music for the summer picnic. He reports on how plans are coming along for the next luncheon out and the trip to see the Tigers play this summer.

He wants to know how many will be traveling to Rochester for a program sponsored by American

Heart Association. He makes certain everyone has a map to get to the backyard barbecue. He asks for volunteers to talk about their lives, after a stroke, to a class of nurses in Madonna College, and he gets them.

"His enthusiasm is the mainstay of the club," said Theresa Koenigsberg, who is a West Bloomfield resident and one of the first members to join the Kan-Doo's when it was formed as a support group for victims of stroke in Farmington Hills.

"The club has certainly been a support for me. After a stroke your

friends are very likely to just drop you — they just don't know what to do with you or for you. The club acts like a clearing house of information for victims of stroke. And we've made new friends here — couples in the same situation we are in," she said speaking of she and her husband, who attend the every week meetings together.

About 90 percent of the club members must depend on one of their family members, a friend or a paid aide to attend the sessions in

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