



Reading Eagle: Susan L. Angstadt | Heritage of Green Hills residents Rosemarie Reinsel and Shirley Friedman toast the success of the day at the facility.

Heritage of Green Hills offers aged adventures

By David Johnson — Reading Eagle correspondent

At the Heritage of Green Hills senior living community in Cumru Township, residents are encouraged to do everything they've never had a chance to do.

That could include dancing on the bar on New Year's Eve, taking a belly-dancing class or designing handbags for charity.

Heritage looks like most other retirement communities of its kind, a beautifully landscaped property with a grand, covered entrance and windows galore. On the inside, however, it buzzes like a collegiate student union. Residents are everywhere, except in their apartments.

Tranquility and Inspiration

Built in 2006, the Heritage has 230 residents living in 181 apartments and 15 villas. The complex, owned by Lowes Enterprises, King of Prussia, sits, barely visible through the trees, at the intersection of Tranquility Lane and Inspiration Boulevard in Cumru. Eighty percent of residents come from Berks County.

Ginny Freyling and her husband, Nelson, were some of the first residents, buying into the property before construction had even started.

"I wanted something new, an adventure," she said.

Freyling claims she was a quiet, timid woman who spent most of her life in Lincoln Park. A year in the Heritage, she says, brought out a new person in her, and she loves it.

"I thought I would become friends with people like myself, quiet and a bit shy, but that's not the case," she said. "The Heritage has brought out the individual in me, and I just love it."

Looks forward to travels

Dick Lewis, a retired sales manager for a Washington, D.C.-area food service equipment company, dreaded the thought of hallways five years ago when he decided to move to the Heritage from Adamstown with his wife, Rosemary. He feared that any retirement community would be institutional. Now, however, he said he looks forward to his travels and the unexpected social situations they bring.

"I've met some great people, and have had many wonderful conversations in these hallways," he said. "In my past, I would've had to make plans to go out and see people, to have conversations, and now it just happens." Lewis values the close, smaller community because it puts emphasis on the individual.

"People here are encouraged to live their own lives the way they want to," he said, "but in a structure that is very hospitable."

Well by Design

At the Heritage, residents take part in a program known as Well by Design. It's based on eight dimensions of wellness: spiritual, emotional, social, vocational, intellectual, physical, health services and environmental. Cheryl Anderson, Well by Design director, drew up the program seven years before the first shovel broke ground on the project.

"We want residents to stay in their homes for the rest of their lives, and the best way to achieve that is by living well," said Anderson. "It is a matter of being healthy and active."

Anderson said residents can have any service they need brought directly to them, from mobile X-rays to medicine management and physical therapy.

Activity at the Heritage is plentiful. There are dozens of things to do every day. Residents can take a water Zumba class, attend lectures on a variety of topics or sing in the community choir. They also tutor students at Reading's Lauer's Park Elementary School, make thousands of pink origami cranes for breast cancer awareness and have created more than 1,200 quilts that they donate to local veterans groups.

On the recent Cinco de Mayo holiday, the community tavern ran out of tequila.

Wants choices

"This generation wants choices, and they're active," said Elizabeth Proffitt, sales and marketing director. "It's not about just keeping busy, though. They have a passion for what they do here."

Anderson says 88 percent of residents are involved in some type of a structured physical program. "Of course it helps to have a very nice young man in the gym to assist you," said Freyling with a wink, referring to 27-year-old Mark Sweigart, fitness program coordinator and trainer.

Inside the gym, one thing stands out: None of the equipment faces the windows or the televisions. It all faces inward, encouraging residents to interact while exercising.

Both Freyling and Lewis agree. They don't know what to call life at the Heritage, but they do know it's not "retirement."

"None of us came here to relax, or to avoid shoveling snow," said Lewis. "We came here for a new lifestyle." He owns an antiques business and is a board member for WellSpan Ephrata Community Hospital.

"I like to call it phase five," said Freyling. "We've grown up, gone to school, had careers, raised families, and now we're living for ourselves."

Freyling said that five is not the final phase, though. She's ready for six, seven and whatever else the future holds.