

Eunice Smith Home is Indeed 'Home' to Residents

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ALTON, IL -- Eunice Smith Home on the campus of Alton Memorial Hospital offers all the comforts of home to its residents. In fact, for shorter rehabilitation or for long-term care, area residents are choosing Eunice Smith Home for their care.

"If I'm going to be in a nursing home, Eunice Smith is the best place to be," says Martha Davey of Alton, who has had three short-term rehab stays at Eunice Smith Home. "The entire staff likes each other, and you can see that right away. That helps make it a very pleasant place to be and leads to good care. I came in originally after back surgery and then had a hip problem. The physical therapy staff is top notch."

Martha's full-time residence is at Skyline Towers in Alton. The mother of 10 once worked with Fern Agney, the longtime office manager at Eunice Smith Home who passed away in February, at the former St. Joseph's Hospital in Alton. Thanks to the help provided at ESH, Martha keeps active in various community organizations.

"I couldn't walk when I first got here, but I give the Eunice Smith staff all the credit in the world for helping me get better," Martha says. "I don't know where I would be without them."

Joan Wittman of Godfrey was a familiar face around Eunice Smith Home long before she became a resident in 2010. A member of St. Mary's Church in Alton, she did Communion services with the Catholic residents for many years. She and her husband, John, have a farm and they have brought produce in to sell to the staff.

"I've had two broken hips in the past and I've chosen to rehab at Eunice Smith. There is a great group of therapists here," Joan Wittman says. "They're on top of things. If a resident has a problem, the staff is quick to get to the bottom of things. I love to sit in the community room and take part in as many activities as I can, particularly 'The Price is Right' on Saturdays. I also love music, so I enjoy the entertainment that comes in. This is a good place to be."

Residents welcome family and visitors daily. The Wittmans have four daughters that visit and all are involved in health care. Eunice Smith Home gets kudos from all of them.

“My husband is here every day and still brings vegetables in for everyone,” Joan says. “He also sets up a lemonade stand for special events. It’s like a family here.”

That family extends from the staff to the residents and to the residents’ families. Much like John Wittman, Frances Gainer visits almost every day to see her father, John Gainer, a 1935 Notre Dame graduate who earned his law degree at Washington University. He moved into Eunice Smith Home in late 2009.

“It’s very easy to familiarize yourself with all of the staff,” Frances says. “They are very responsive to any issues that come up. I’ve lived with my Dad in Godfrey since my Mom died in 1999. It just got to the point where he couldn’t be at home any longer. I’m here for several hours each day. It’s very nice. I recommend Eunice Smith Home to my friends.”

Gwen Watson came to Eunice Smith Home in July 2010 after injuring her legs in a fall. That didn’t interfere much with a love affair she’s had for almost 80 years with her husband, J.R. He lives at Villa Rose in Bethalto but comes to Eunice Smith Home daily to visit his bride. Gwen stands at the door and waves as J.R. boards the bus to return to Villa Rose each day. She also carries a cell phone so they can talk to each other frequently when apart.

“He stays as long as he wants,” Gwen says of J.R., who was a charter member of Calvary Baptist Church in Alton when it opened in 1928. “We always have a good time here. All of the people are just so nice, and we enjoy watching the birds (in a cage near the nurses’ desk).”

Eunice Smith Home receives high marks not only from residents and their families. It was recently named to the US News and World Report’s “Best Nursing Homes” 2011 list for Illinois and received outstanding marks for nurse staffing and overall care. For more information about Eunice Smith Home, please call (618) 463-7330.

Martha Davey, a resident at Eunice Smith Home, works on some strawberry plants along with Susan Tomlin of the ESH staff.

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