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St. John's transforms nursing home care locally and nationally as it opens two Green House nursing homes in Penfield's new Arbor Ridge community

Residential-style nursing homes are the first in the nation located "off campus" in suburban/residential area, will bring elders back to their home community

Ribbon-cutting ceremony/dedication scheduled for Thursday, October 6 at 11:00 am

In October, 20 elders will leave the St. John's nursing home on Highland Avenue in Rochester and move to two new residential-style nursing homes 10 miles away in suburban Penfield.

In their new Green House homes, not only will they'll benefit from a new philosophy of care as well as a full range of personal care and clinical services, they'll live in a more residential environment as they continue to grow meaningful relationships while being closer to family and friends, congregations and community.

Of the 113 Green House homes now operating on 49 campuses in 18 states throughout the nation and serving approximately 1,500 elders, St. John's Green House homes are unique.

"Our Green House homes are the only homes in the nation that are decentralized, located away from the main campus and fully integrated into a wider residential community," says St. John's president Charles Runyon. "We've adopted and expanded the Green House philosophy because we believe this non-institutional approach will revolutionize what people want for long-term care."

THE GREEN HOUSE[®] Project (www.thegreenhouseproject.org) is a program of the national non-profit NCB Capital Impact (www.ncbcapitalimpact.org); it's based in Arlington, Virginia and was initially funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Its purpose: Promote an innovative model for residential long-term care that involves a total rethinking of the philosophy of care, architecture, and organizational structure normally associated with long-term care.

As articulated by the originator of the Green House concept, geriatrician William Thomas, M.D., a Green House home can be defined as an "intentional community" - a place where a group of unrelated people join together and share the rhythm of daily life to serve a noble purpose: the care of the elderly.

On a site visit to Penfield, THE GREEN HOUSE[®] Project chief operating officer Susan Frazier remarked how well the homes were integrated into the larger community. "What St. John's has done is truly unique and will become a model for other communities in the United States," she observed. "If I didn't know they were Green House homes, I would have thought they were just beautiful homes within a residential subdivision - they're the ideal combination of form, function and Green House philosophy."

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Arbor Ridge Community

Located off of Fellows Road in Penfield, Arbor Ridge is a new community developed by Pride Mark Homes (www.pmhomes.com) comprising 82 ranch-style townhomes and a community center owned by the townhouse residents. As they market Arbor Ridge to home buyers, Pride Mark officials say the presence of the Green House homes is an important selling point.

“Many of our home buyers are empty nesters and they appreciate the presence of the Green House homes and the value they bring to the neighborhood,” says Jim Barbato Jr., president of Pride Mark Homes. “The Green House homes offer wonderful opportunities for interaction and volunteerism as well as offer peace of mind should anyone need long-term care in the future.

“The leadership at St. John’s has worked very hard to be sure the Green House homes blend in with their respective communities to give elders a true residential feel and experience, and I believe we’ve accomplished that goal.”

Green House specifications

St. John’s Green House homes are licensed as skilled nursing facilities and were developed in conjunction with the New York Department of Health; they meet all applicable federal and state regulatory requirements.

The cost to build each Green House home in Penfield is \$2.5 million. Seed money was provided by the St. John’s Foundation. Each 8,000-square foot ranch house is home to 10 elders and features:

- Ten private rooms with full-size beds and private baths
- Large hearth area adjoining a kitchen that allows elders to participate in meal preparation
- Pleasant, family-style dining
- Indoor and outdoor activity space and gardens

Green House homes operate at a cost comparable to more traditional nursing homes. There is no premium or extra cost to the elder to live in a Green House.

The St. John’s Green House homes in Penfield were designed by SWBR Architects and built by Pride Mark Construction and Management. The architectural style of the Green House homes “blends seamlessly with the style of the surrounding townhouses, supporting the concept that the Green House homes are truly residential and not institutional,” adds Barbato.

Future Green House homes in Rochester

These Green House homes are the first in a long-range plan for more homes throughout the Rochester area in both city and suburban settings. Continuing its collaboration with Pride Mark Homes, St. John’s (www.stjohnshome.com) will next work on two Green House homes in Henrietta. Homes in Brighton, Victor and Perinton are also on the drawing board.

As residents leave the St. John’s 6-story facility on Highland Ave., individual floors will be renovated into Green House living or similar arrangements.

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Life in a Green House home

Each person who lives in a Green House home has a private bedroom and full bathroom, opening to a central hearth/living area and an open kitchen and dining area. Elders share meals at a common table. Family members, friends and staff are welcome to join the community at mealtimes and for other activities.

The staff has core training as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), plus extensive training in the Green House philosophy, the self-managed work team structure of the Green House home, culinary skills, and household management. A team of universal workers known as Shahbazim provide personal care, meal preparation, and light housekeeping and laundry, among other duties.

A clinical support team includes nurses, social workers, therapists, physicians, activities and dietary professionals, and pharmacists. Nurses serve each Green House home on a 24-hour basis.

The people who live and work in a Green House home collaborate to create a daily routine that meets an elder's individual needs. If they wish, elders can help cook, and assist with light housekeeping and laundry. There is no predetermined routine, facilitating their independence and their ability to pursue individual interests.

The Green House model is the vision of William Thomas, M.D. a Harvard-educated geriatrician in Ithaca, New York and is based on his Eden Alternative model of nursing home care, which was adopted by St. John's in 2004.

NCB Capital Impact provides technical assistance, training, peer networks and pre-development loans to organizations such as St. John's, the only Rochester organization affiliated with THE GREEN HOUSE[®] Project.

Additional sources

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