

Assisted-living facility wants to make residents feel at home

BY CHRISTA SARACCÒ

For the Courier

When Ken Jaeger decided to build a senior living community, he wanted it to feel warm and inviting like his grandmother's house, and that is how MorningStar Senior Assisted Living in Littleton came into being.

The \$16.1 million facility is designed to make residents feel at home. Jaeger has a 20-year background in the senior care industry and got the idea for MorningStar about four years ago. He decided it was time to leave the corporate world and create a facility in line with his values.

"I wanted to create a family environment that fit with my core values," he said. "I wanted to have a home for people to live that was like the one they grew up in, and one that is based on good Christian values."

MorningStar, which opened last month, has space for 85 residents; 69 of the rooms are for assisted living and 16 for memory-impaired residents.

The assisted-living space is warmly decorated, with each "neighborhood" designed in a different theme. A grand staircase winds from the second to the main floor with a 325-gallon salt-water fish tank at the top. According to staff, some of the residents have made a pastime of naming the colorful fish.

The facility has a dining room that seats 65 with a piano in the corner. A chef prepares the food, and there is a formal, more private dining room that residents can reserve for special occasions or parties.

Flo Grepling, 78, moved into MorningStar on Sept. 1 to be closer to her daughter, who lives in Roxborough Park. She lives in a one-bedroom suite and says she loves being there.

"The food here is five-star; it's wonderful," Grepling said. "This facility is beautiful, but the staff make the atmosphere. This is a wonderful place to live."

Even though Grepling uses a wheelchair and gets help from staff when necessary, she still feels a sense of independence. She takes trips to the mall, attends a regular exercise class and enjoys the crafts and activities.

The facility offers a surround-sound theater where residents can request their favorite movies, a nondenominational chapel, a library, activity/game room, a beauty salon, country store, massage therapy, laundry room, exercise classes, arts and crafts, supervised spa room with hot tub, and a 24-hour bistro.

The memory-impaired area is designed so residents can move about in a safe environment. The area is locked and supervised, with more personalized care 24 hours a day.

While those residents also have access to MorningStar's chef, the area has its own kitchen and a tranquility room designed to help calm any resident who may become agitated. It offers a comfy chair, soft music and aromatherapy.

All of the rooms at the facility are designed for residents to bring in their own furnishings, or staff will help buy furniture on request. They have private, locked entry, carpet, full-size refrigerators, disabled-accessible showers, individual climate control, high-speed Internet access and basic cable.

The facility also offers a wellness center with a nurse on staff 24 hours a day. All residents have a wireless call button with a locator to summon help 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The rooms at Morningstar are on a month-to-month lease-only basis and range from \$3,000 to \$5,500 per month, depending on the size of the room and the amount of care needed. That includes meals, house-keeping, maintenance and laundry. Items at the country store, massage therapy, beauty

salon and special movie channels are not included in the monthly fee.

While the facility currently has 40 residents, Jaeger anticipates it will be full in six months.

"Most facilities similar to ours take about 18 months to fill," he said. "I believe MorningStar will be full in six months. The amount of interest we've had has been incredible."

He has plans to build other facilities around the metro area, including a facility in the Applewood area at West 26th Avenue and Youngfield Street in Lakewood. He anticipates breaking ground in February and opening in 2008. Jaeger has also recently acquired Dayton Place in Aurora, a 17-year-

old facility where he plans a \$1.5 million remodel.

"I want residents to be as comfortable and individual as possible," Jaeger said. "They should have a place to live with dignity

where they can feel safe and warm, and have a place to call home."

MorningStar Senior Living is at 5344 S. Kipling Parkway in Littleton. A three-day open house is planned Nov. 3-5 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, visit www.morningstarseniorliving.com or call 303-972-3030.



Photo by TIM McCLANAHAN | For the Courier

MORNINGSTAR ASSISTED LIVING'S first resident, Flo Grepling, sits before the winding staircase inside the entrance of the facility.