

Business

Home sweet home for Alzheimer’s patients

Assisted living center caters to those with memory impairments

By Vicky Gits
Staff Writer

When Sheryl Thompson's father began developing Alzheimer's disease and dementia in his 70s, she was determined to find a nursing-home alternative somewhere in Orange County, Calif.

But the kind of high quality, Alzheimer's-oriented group home she was looking for didn't exist. So she and husband John took a huge risk. They cashed in their 401k accounts and started a company of their own, Assured Assisted Living.

Over 10 years the Thompsons turned one ranch home in Fountain Valley, Calif., into a collection of 14 neighborhood-based facilities catering to people with memory impairments. Each home housed six residents and three full-time caregivers.

Today their goal is to bring the same kind of service to Castle Rock, where they have purchased three ranch homes, two in The Havens in Hazen-Moore and one in Red Hawk. Each house, including remodeling and landscaping, cost about \$500,000.

The home in Red Hawk is nearly ready to open in April and the others are being built and are scheduled to open sometime in June. All were approved by a 6-1 vote of town council last week.

The group home in Red Hawk on Paonia Court has about 2,700 square feet with five bedrooms on the main floor for nine residents. The basement houses three live-in caregivers. There is a dining room, great room, kitchen and patio with access to a fenced yard.

Meeting resistance

This home would have been open sooner, Thompson said, but the local homeowners association delayed its approval for handicapped accessible ramps and a deck for three months from end of last November to Feb. 22.

"We had turned in all the permits and they refused to give us permission," Thompson said. "At the council



PHOTO BY PHILLIP TUINSTRA

The Assured Assisted Living living room includes luxury leather recliners, a fireplace and other sophisticated decor to offer residents a warm, inviting living environment.

meeting on Feb. 22, the (HOA) president asked does he need to comply and the council said yes. The next day they approved it, but they held us up.

"There is someone else in the neighborhood who has a ramp. So it was just a homeowner with a problem. For me to think they would delay for four months is disheartening."

Milton Tuell, president of the Red Hawk homeowners association, said the HOA was waiting for an adequate

drawing of the expected ramp system and that caused a brief slowdown. He does not object to the idea of a group home for senior Alzheimer's and stroke patients in the Red Hawk neighborhood.

Tuell is running as a council candidate from District 3.

"I personally don't care, but there were several homeowners that brought concerns to us. ... All we wanted was a better idea of what it would look like," Tuell said.

Federal protections

The Fair Housing Act, passed in 1968, prohibits discrimination in housing for certain classes of people. In 1988, the act was expanded to include people with disabilities, according to a planning department memo.

If a town were to make a zoning decision that had the effect of limiting the protected group's equal housing opportunity it could be sued.

Studies have shown that, in general, assisted-living facilities operate like a typical single-family home, the planning memo says.

They do not affect property values and have no effect on how long it takes to sell neighboring property, even homes immediately next door. Studies also show that traffic is similar to single-family residences.

Emphasizing the positive

Thompson, who is a registered nurse, recognized early that Alzheimer's patients in typical nursing homes seem to regress.

"In larger institutions they get lost," she said. "They can't remember where they are. They get afraid of going out and hibernate in their rooms where they feel secure. Too much noise, activity and stimulation can compound behaviors and anxiety."

Thompson said it is crucial to structure patients' days so they are constantly occupied. "They sleep well at night if they pass the day doing purposeful activities."

In a lot of homes, patients are sedated to keep them from moving around and hurting themselves. They spend most of the time "passed out in wheelchairs," Thompson said. "I did not want my father to go through that."

Stressing self-sufficiency

Thompson insists on getting patients to walk, not sit.

"If necessary, we'll get a client and put them on an aggressive rehab program and teach them how to walk again. It's much easier just to put them in a wheelchair," she said.

She has gone so far as to turn down a customer who had the capacity to walk but preferred to lie in bed all day.

Assured Assisted Living

■ Owners — Sheryl and John Thompson

■ Facilities — Group homes in contemporary ranches for up to nine Alzheimer's and stroke patients. Units are in residential neighborhoods and staffed by three live-in caregivers.

■ Services — Grooming, self-feeding, housekeeping, meals, snacks and hydration.

■ Staff — Each home has 24-hour protective supervision by staff specially trained in Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

■ Cost — \$3,500 a month for a shared room.

■ Philosophy — Tranquil, secure home environment is more like family and encourages feelings of security and freedom that helps reduce the need for medication. Clients are encouraged to walk, dress themselves and participate in daily activities.

For information call 303-814-2688 or see assuredassistedliving.com.

Thompson and her staff even helped a woman who hadn't used her voice for 12 years to begin to sing again. They make sure patients dress themselves if it's remotely possible, otherwise people could lose their dressing ability.

It all helps reduce the need for medication and therapy, Thompson said.

Services of a private-home setting actually cost less than a typically nursing home, Thompson said. Assured Living charges \$3,500 a month for a shared room, which includes meals and activities, versus \$5,000 to \$8,000 a month for a nursing home, especially for someone with Alzheimer's.

Thompson chose to move to Douglas County because her research shows it is a county with a need for assisted services. She has plenty of openings now but expects the homes to fill up fast once they are in move-in condition.

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Roadhouse offers legendary food, service

By Chris Michlewicz
Staff Writer

There is a new kid in town from Texas that offers "legendary food" and "legendary service."

Texas Roadhouse, 11205 S. Parker Road, which opened in Parker in December, promises hearty, hand-cut steaks, fall-off-the-bone ribs and made-from-scratch sides. The 6,922-square-foot southern barbecue restaurant is northeast of Pavilions Drive and Twenty Mile Road in the Parker Pavilions Commercial Park.

Texas Roadhouse operates and franchises more than 160 signature steak restaurants in 34 states. The restaurant, which is the eighth to be built in Colorado, sits on a 1.75-acre lot west of Office Depot and has a capacity for 235 customers.

All of the food is prepared from

scratch using fresh, high-quality ingredients. Texas Roadhouse was voted No. 1 for menu variety and value in the 2004 Restaurant and Institution Magazine's Choice in Chains guest survey.

"We are there to serve the best possible food we can and satisfy all of our guests with what they want," said Lopa Desai, a public relations representative for the national chain.

She said Texas Roadhouse provides numerous employment opportunities and works hard at becoming an active member in the community.

The restaurant serves massive margaritas at miniscule prices during happy hour and provides heaping helpings of food.

"Texas Roadhouse is a place where the whole family can enjoy great food in a fun-filled, lively atmosphere at an affordable price," says a statement from

the restaurant. "Our team has an incredible sense of pride in everything we do."

Business hours are from 4 to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 4 to 11 p.m. Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday and 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sunday. Call 303-805-5848 for information.

"We are there to serve the best possible food we can and satisfy all of our guests with what they want."

— Lopa Desai
public relations representative
for Texas Roadhouse



Texas Roadhouse Service Manager Abel Botello holds a plate of the restaurant's signature foods, Pork Baby Back Ribs and Loaded Sweet Potato. The chain opened in the Parker Pavilion shopping center Dec. 13, 2004.

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