

NORTH SHORE

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SENIOR CLASS

Seniors and caregivers (left) splash at the Pearl Aquatic Center at The Ponds in Lincolnshire. A cozy lobby (upper right) welcomes visitors to The Wealshire. The facilities (below) encompass 20 acres.



Brave New Age

How nursing and assisted-living facilities are evolving to serve today's booming senior population in comfort and style.

By Sherry Thomas

Arnold Goldberg, founder and president of The Wealshire and The Ponds "life-care communities" in Lincolnshire, says when his Russian immigrant grandmother started caring for the sick and the elderly in the early 1900s, patients slept on cots in her North Side Chicago apartment. She got them their medicine, fed them chicken soup and found doctors willing to make house calls.

As a woman who escaped the Bolsheviks and came to Ellis Island with her husband and six children, Pearl Goldberg had always felt a certain responsibility to help the less fortunate. But when her husband, Arnie's grandfather, became too ill to work and she became the family breadwinner, Grandma Pearl began thinking about her services as a business.

For a nickel a week she'd feed them, house them and fetch their medicine when they needed it, eventually converting her Chicago two-flat into a home for 14 elderly people.

"She had this amazing entrepreneurial spirit," Arnie adds. "She went to Walgreens and got 30 spiral notebooks, and that became (an early form of medical charting in) her business."

The nursing home and assisted-living industry has changed dramatically since Pearl Goldberg's humble beginnings. Today's senior-care compounds — including the 20-acre facility her grandson founded more than a decade ago — are becoming more like posh, self-contained "communities" where people at every stage of life can not only get the quality medical care they need but continue living independently with luxury amenities once unheard of in a "nursing" or "assisted-living" setting.

"It's very hard to fill your father's shoes," Arnie Goldberg says, telling how his father, Isadore Goldberg, helped Pearl grow the business and went on to pioneer one of the largest specialized skilled-nursing facilities in Chicago. "People always thought of me as 'Mr. Goldberg's son,' but I wanted to change things and improve things."

The demand for better, more innovative elder care was evident, and after years of education and research, Arnie Goldberg became particularly interested in the evolving needs of Alzheimer's patients. In 1995, Goldberg opened The Wealshire, a 285-unit luxury nursing facility specifically designed to meet those needs through innovative, therapeutic programs. It has since expanded to provide upscale assisted-living through The Ponds, special care for patients suffering from Parkinson's disease and a new 24-hour nursing option called Ponds Plus.

The studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments at The Ponds offer such "extras" as a fitness room, swimming pool, in-home surround-sound theater, concierge services and an on-premises salon in what Arnie and his staff describe as "sophisticated living in a culture of caring."

Another such community is The Garlands of Barrington, a luxury retirement-living enclave with a "state-of-the-heart" assisted-living option through Prairieview at The Garlands.

"When you walk in, you don't feel like you're in a health care community," says Denise Dale, Prairieview's long-term-care administrator, "you feel like you are in a grand condominium downtown."

The philosophy *nouveau* — one that Goldberg invokes as well — is a focus on "ability-centered" care, with attention to strengths, not deficits.

"The biggest thing is just excellent continual care, to maintain those functional skills as long as possible in a home-like environment," Dale adds. "Here at the Garlands, the apartments are just like something you would rent in a (retirement) community, and they just make the lifestyle very elegant and very comfortable."

So instead of feeling like they are going "to a home," she says, "they feel like they're at home."

And there's a big difference. Much like The Ponds, residents at Prairieview can enjoy the same posh amenities and services offered to their counterparts at The Garlands, from the pool to the spa to the performing arts center.

"The whole philosophy is to provide services throughout that continuum of retirement care. Here at The Garlands, we range all the way from independent living to skilled nursing, and there are a wide range of services between the two," Dale explains. "I think there's going to be a much stronger demand for more communities like ours in the future."

If anyone can vouch for the changes and innovations in senior living and health care over the last century, it might be the staff at Lutheran Home in Arlington Heights, which got its start in 1892 as Altenheim Gesellschaft, which translates as the "Old Folks Home Association."

"There were just a lot of farms and a lot of fields around here, and a couple of dirt roads," says Samantha Braden, director of marketing services for Lutheran Life Communities, which administers eight levels of senior living and care at its Oakton Street campus. "When it was first started, there was just one level of care — the traditional nursing-home type of setting."

While the Altenheim gave people "who didn't have a place to go" a home, the population it served was very limited. For one, all residents needed to be "able-bodied" so they could perform a job in the house or on the farm. Secondly, they all had to be of the Lutheran faith.

Braden says the current Lutheran Home complex was built on the site of the former farm in 1953 as the waiting list grew and the needs of the frail or infirm became more obvious. A 32-person nursing wing was opened in the late 1970s, expanding residency to include people of all religious denominations. Over the years, the Lutheran Home community has also expanded to include the Hearthstone assisted-living facility, home-health options and a three-tiered memory-loss continuum.

"In terms of our physical environment, we're always looking at that and trying to make our physical environment as home-like as possible," Braden adds. "We have all private rooms and create neighborhoods in our memory-support continuum. We have 12 people living together with their own living room area, their own pantry and their own kitchen area."

The power of "home" can also be seen at Mather Pavilion, a Mather Lifeways residential nursing-care community in downtown Evanston, where carpeted private or semi-private rooms can be furnished with personal belongings.

"It certainly is a very home-like atmosphere," says Ciaran O'Sullivan, director of nursing at the Mather Pavilion. "We strive to make it as comfortable a living situation as possible — to resemble a home-like atmosphere within the parameters of 24-hour nursing care."

Daily life at Mather Pavilion is much like daily life at any upscale continuing-care retirement center. Residents have access to the Wellness Clinic, two beauty parlor/barbershops and dining services, as well as a myriad of social, recreational, cultural and educational activities.

"We have a very, very sophisticated activity program run by a specific activity director," O'Sullivan adds. "We have bus trips all over the place; they go to restaurants, Chicago Botanic Garden ... and they also go on what we call joy rides, where we might just get in a bus and drive up and down the North Shore."

Sometimes it's to take in all the holiday lights. Sometimes it's to see what's going on downtown. But almost always, O'Sullivan says, it's about seeing places and doing things that jog the memory and spark lively conversation, even if it's just about "the way things used to be."

"It's a lot of fun," says O'Sullivan. "It's fun to work here, but it's a lot of fun for people who live here. We almost never have move-outs. People come and they stay forever here because they like it."

And that, O'Sullivan and the others agree, is one of the many advantages of this brave new age of continuing care — a world where you can move into luxury retirement living as active seniors, become part of a community and get all the help you need along the way. ■

Retirement Communities

2007

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Facilities listed as retirement communities are those in which a senior is expected to function independently. **COLUMN 1** identifies the facility, its visiting hours and whether it has any religious affiliation. Religious affiliation is listed as another means of identifying the owner or operator of the facility. The fact that a facility may have a particular religious affiliation is not intended to suggest that the facility discriminates against persons of other religions. **COLUMN 2** lists rates for private [P] and semi-private [SP] rooms and apartments, endowments and other fees, and other vital residency details. **COLUMN 3** identifies the medical care available on-site and affiliated hospitals. **COLUMN 4** lists some common services the facilities may or may not offer. **COLUMN 5** lists additional services and programs available at the facility.

NAME	ROOMS/RATES	MEDICAL CARE/AFFILIATIONS	SERVICES	ADDITIONAL AMENITIES
Mather Place at The Georgian 422 Davis St. Evanston 60201 847/492-5000 www.matherlifeways.com	110 apts.; Studio: \$1,270-\$2,380/mo., 1 br: \$2,460-\$3,360, 1 br deluxe: \$2,570-\$4,080, 2 br: \$2,705-\$4,325, 2 br deluxe: \$3,950-\$5,000 Second person fee: \$500; Community fee: \$2,750 Month-to-month rental option		<input type="checkbox"/> ADC <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input type="checkbox"/> AC <input type="checkbox"/> PT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BB <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EA <input type="checkbox"/> ST/RC <input type="checkbox"/> HP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L	1 meal/day

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Nursing Home Facilities

Do your research before choosing a nursing home. The Web sites of the Illinois Department of Public Health (www.idph.state.il.us) and the U.S. government's Medicare program (www.medicare.gov) provide valuable information about nursing homes that have been subject to disciplinary action.

Nursing home facilities offer basic to skilled care for adults dependent on others for daily functions, with medical staff available 24 hours a day. Some of these facilities may have restrictions on the types of patients they can serve. Please contact the facility for details. **COLUMN 1** identifies the facility, its visiting hours, and whether it has any religious affiliation. Religious affiliation is listed as another means of identifying the owner or operator of the facility. The fact that a facility may have a particular religious affiliation is not intended to suggest that the facility discriminates against persons of other religions. **COLUMN 2** lists rates for private [P] and semi-private [SP] rooms and apartments, endowments and other fees, and other vital residency details. **COLUMN 3** identifies the medical care available on-site and affiliated hospitals. **COLUMN 4** lists some common services the facility may or may not offer. **COLUMN 5** lists additional services and programs available at the facility.

NAME	ROOMS/RATES	MEDICAL CARE/AFFILIATIONS	SERVICES	ADDITIONAL AMENITIES
Mather Pavilion 820 Foster St. Evanston 60201 847/492-5679 www.matherlifeways.com Medicare non-profit	180 beds P: \$263/day SP: \$229/day Shared rooms available for couples No restrictions		<input type="checkbox"/> ADC <input type="checkbox"/> PA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BB <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EA <input type="checkbox"/> ST/RC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HP <input type="checkbox"/> TS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L	3 meals/day, 2 floors of memory support, regular out trips, daily activities, social workers on staff, high staff-patient ratios, low staff turnover, RN managers on all floors, home visits for admission acceptance as needed