



July 9, 2010

Number 13

Carrier Mills Nursing and Rehab Gets a New Look

"There's no place like home" may be a line from an ever-popular movie, but the sentiment still rings true. Culture change in nursing facilities is a trend that is on the rise throughout the state of Illinois, and making residents feel like they're at home instead of an institution has become a priority. Scott Stout, administrator of Carrier Mills Nursing and Rehab in Carrier Mills, Illinois, took notice of this trend last year and decided his facility could use some changes to create a new look and feel -- a more "home-like" environment for the residents who live there.



The Bistro offers easier access to kitchen equipment for residents in wheelchairs.

To get the ball rolling, Stout contacted Doreen Gregory, a consultant and designer with more than three decades of experience designing for the health care profession, who specializes in culture change in nursing homes. Gregory had assisted with past renovation projects at Carrier Mills, and Stout was confident that she would have some great ideas for the new environment he was hoping to create. Plans began in the fall to create a community-oriented atmosphere within the facility, with the majority of the actual construction work taking place after the New Year so that the residents could enjoy their holiday season with as little disruption as possible.



The Sweet Shop keeps snacks available for residents with a sweet tooth.

Once the renovations began, they moved quickly. The common areas of the facility were tackled first. Hallways were redone, new wallpaper and chair railing were installed and new decorations were put up. A bistro area was created with a number of new features, such as the microwave and sink being positioned lower, to make using the kitchen easier for those residents in wheelchairs and a second dining room was added. Other common areas were also created, including the gift shop where residents can purchase items like candy and cards for special occasions and an ice cream parlor. A newsstand, where residents can peruse magazines and a variety of newspapers, and a movie theater with theater-style seating and a popcorn machine were also added. All of these changes took place over several months and go a long way towards creating the "home-like" environment Stout was looking for.



Residents peruse their favorite periodicals at The Newsstand.

Once the big projects are finished and out of the way, the next step will be to work on the residents' rooms, repainting the walls and freshening up the spaces. This will be the last step in what has been a very big undertaking, but 100 percent worth the effort. After all of the renovations are complete, Stout plans to hold an Open House at the facility, so that the community can come in and see all the work that has been put into creating a home for the residents. According to Stout, the residents of Carrier Mills love all of the changes. "It is absolutely beautiful," said Stout, "I am very proud of the work that has been done."