

Young at Heart: Delmar Gardens of O'Fallon

By Lisa Marino

Delmar Gardens' new O'Fallon facility is a nursing home with some unusual residents: children. No, the children don't live there like their elderly counterparts, but some of them wish that they did.

"My son actually began crying the other day because he wanted to come back here and see Betty, one of our residents," explains Mary Grodeon, Assistant Administrator for Delmar Gardens.

Children like Grodeon's son participate in Delmar Gardens' daycare, located in the center of the new O'Fallon facility. In fact, the nursing home is built around the children's playground, allowing residents to see the children playing outside, often from their own rooms. There is also much interaction between the children and residents. "We have a lot of inter-generational activities," Grodeon says. In addition to participating in crafts together, the children also deliver the residents their mail.



This is not the only unique aspect to the new O'Fallon facility. It will have a Specialized Care Unit with 30 beds for Alzheimer's residents as well. Bright colors perk up each room, tons of natural light flood the area and the fish in the salt water aquarium have been fed.

In addition to these soothing surroundings, Alzheimer's residents will also have their own special activities provided by professional recreational therapists.

There's balloon volleyball ("The residents *love* it, plus it helps with their hand-eye coordination"), a theater room that shows old movies, an activity room with things like cross stitching and puzzles, Sprinkler Day with the kids once a week in the summer, an ice cream parlor and a styling salon just to name a few amenities.

When residents are not participating in such activities, they can retire to their rooms (complete with their own little patio) to relax. Walking through the halls, one will find almost every door wide open. Many doors have handcrafted signs on them as well. Grodeon explains, "If it's a resident's birthday, we make a happy birthday sign. If someone new arrives, we make a welcome sign. And if someone returns from hospitalization or something similar, we make a welcome back sign. We're committed to making them feel good."

And that seems to be an important dynamic at the new Delmar Gardens of O'Fallon location: making residents feel good. "We are very excited about our new residents here in O'Fallon, as well as the opening of our new state-of-the-art specialized care unit," Grodeon says smiling.

For more information about Delmar Gardens of O'Fallon, please call 636-240-6100.

Did You Know? Delmar Gardens was Memory Walk 2004's Diamond Sponsor and has been a sponsor since the walk began sixteen years ago. In 2004, staff, families and residents from Delmar Gardens facilities helped to raise over \$26,000 for the St. Louis chapter, putting the chapter over its stretch goal of \$405,000.