



Feeling At Home

loveable Australian Shepard. “Cory has been a part of our family for 10 years,” says Ms. Clark. “His manners are impeccable and he is always a real gentleman.”

“Our residents love him and can get a warm and friendly greeting from him any time they need one,” she adds.

A fish tank in the Altenheim’s library has also proven to be a popular gathering spot for residents desiring the calming effect of less active pets.

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According to Ms. Clark, one can also make use of any geographical advantages a facility might offer. For example, the Altenheim was built on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi. Most of the common-use areas, like the dining room and recreation room, offer a panoramic view of the river.

Some residents keep journals listing eagle sightings or they keep a log of riverboat traffic. “Even weather watching on the Mississippi can be spectacular,” adds Ms. Clark.

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You won’t see a lot of bare, white walls and muted furniture at the Altenheim: Ms. Clark has opted for lots of color and warmth in everything from the wall coverings to the furniture and accessories.

The challenge to continue this quiet transformation in senior care facilities will demand more innovative thinking on the part of administrators like Ms. Clark and the owners and governing boards of the facilities they represent.

It’s a challenge Ms. Clark is more than willing to accept: “If there is something a resident wants to have or do here – and if it isn’t intrusive or harmful to anyone else – then why not?”

There is a quiet transformation taking place in senior care facilities throughout the country.

Gone are the days when these facilities were casually known as “rest homes”. Today, the trend is toward creating an active, stimulating and dynamic environment where residents feel more like they are “at home,” instead of “in a home.”

“Our philosophy has always been that this is the residents’ home, and we want them to feel at home,” states Kathy Clark, Administrator of St. Louis Altenheim, and Assisted and Long-term Care facility.

And although it’s not always an easy task, it often seems the best rule-of-thumb is to “keep it simple.” For instance, many residents were pet owners. So, just having a pet around can help them feel a little more at home.

At St. Louis Altenheim, this function is fulfilled by Cory, a