

TOWN NEWS

FARMINGTON VALLEY

Finding A Place To Call Home

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In his room at the Hebrew Home in West Hartford, Sidney Lebowitz has a bed, a shelf and a roommate he barely knows. The bed is where he watches television and listens to music and the shelf

AREAWIDE

is for his books, CDs and personal items. It's not a bad place to live, he said, but he would like to have more privacy.

"You can't really talk to anyone here," he said of his fellow residents. "I get very lonely. ... Everybody keeps telling me I don't really belong here."

Lebowitz, 80, said he doesn't want to burden his children, but he can't live alone and the units in the assisted living communities he looked into cost between \$2,500 and \$4,000 a month — way beyond his means. Living at the Hebrew Home, Lebowitz is able to keep only about \$50 of his Social Security check each month.

So when he heard of a new, affordably priced assisted living complex opening this month in Hartford, Lebowitz jump-

New Assisted Living Complex Offers A Degree Of Independence

ed at the chance for independence.

"I think it's a marvelous opportunity for me," he said of The Retreat, a 100-unit complex at 90 Retreat Ave. "I'm a little apprehensive, but my friends tell me not to worry. I have always been pretty good at meeting people"

At The Retreat, Lebowitz would have his own apartment with new carpeting, fresh paint and a kitchenette. Down the hall there will be a community area where he can spend time with his family and meet his new neighbors. The first floor of the building will have a café and a library, a lounge with a fireplace and a beauty salon. The dining room will be open at various times to accommodate different eating schedules and a smaller dining area can be used for parties and family gatherings. And Lebowitz would be able to keep a little more of his Social Security check. "One of our goals is to help people maintain their lifelong patterns," said Gustave Keach, executive director of The Retreat. He is a licensed

nursing home administrator and holds a master's degree in health administration. "We may have early risers and late risers, so we hope to be flexible with our times so people can maintain their living style."

Overseen by the Community Renewal Team, The Retreat is one of two state-initiated demonstration pilot projects. A similar 25-unit complex is in Glastonbury. Unit rentals are based on the income of the resident and the type of services they require, said Liz Dupont-Diehl, spokeswoman for the Community Renewal Team.

"It's a great example of how CRT can carry out our mission by being flexible and responding to the changing needs of the community," said Dupont-Diehl. "The private market was just not providing this type of facility to the low income people who need it."

The facility's food plan is additional, but the 24-hour emergency response system and personal care options like linen

service and assistance with bathing and medications are included in the price. There is also an activity room, where residents can participate in activities, play cards, watch movies or hear lectures and musical performances. Hebrew Community Services, which is part of the Hebrew Health Care and Assisted Living Services Agency, will provide the health care services.

The Retreat was made possible by a special Medicaid waiver passed by the Connecticut legislature, which helps cover the cost of the services; tax credits were used for the construction costs, which was about \$17 million, said Dupont-Diehl. It is also supported by the Department of Social Services, the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, the Department of Public Health and the Office of Policy and Management.

"A place like this is a Godsend really," said Lebowitz. "I would not be able to move into an assisted living place if this didn't open."

An open house is scheduled Jan. 27. For more information go to www.retreatassistedliving.org or call 860-560-2273.