

Relief For Low-Income Elderly

Here's wishing much success to the Community Renewal Team as it embarks on an experiment that promises to revolutionize the way the elderly are cared for in Connecticut.

The nonprofit agency has just constructed and opened The Retreat at 80 Retreat Ave. in Hartford. With 100 apartments, it is the largest assisted-living complex for the poor in the state.

Until recently, the only option open to low-income seniors who need minimal help with daily living was to forfeit their savings to get Medicaid reimbursement and surrender themselves to the intensive and costly services of a nursing home.

But state officials calculated several years ago that it would probably cost the government far less if low-income people, 65 and older, had access to affordable housing units in an environment that provided three meals a day, light housekeeping and maintenance, laundry service and social, cultural, recreational and

fitness programs.

It is likely that more assisted-living facilities will spring up in other parts of Connecticut. State officials solicited proposals for the project seven years ago and CRT was one of five builders to be selected. The Retreat is the second of the five to be built. The first was a 25-unit complex in Glastonbury.

The Retreat's \$17 million building, with its spacious living units and nicely appointed common areas, was paid for with funds from the state departments of Social Services and Economic and Community Development; the Connecticut

Housing and Finance Authority; and private banks through a state tax-credit program.

As with conventional assisted-living facilities, residents contribute financially toward their care, including \$380 a month for meals. But through government subsidies and rental assistance, the contribution is kept to a level that allows the residents to retain some spending money and their dignity.

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