

Enhanced Edition

Sections:

Front Page

National

Local News

Obituaries

Opinion

Business

Sports

Life & Arts

Saratoga News

Fulton Montgomery
Schoharie News

Gazette Online:

Today's Classifieds

Gazette Blogs

Subscribe to the Print
Gazette

LOCAL NEWS

SCHENECTADY : Nursing-rehab facility set to open

BY BETHANY BUMP Gazette Reporter

The realization of a decadelong dream hit Patrick Martone on Wednesday, as he was leading family members on a tour of their loved ones' new home.

"There were people literally crying," he said. "They were saying they couldn't have imagined it would be this good. The day we walk in and see the look on residents' faces, that will be a really great day."

The Capital Living Nursing and Rehabilitation Centre at 526 Altamont Ave. feels more like a home than a residential health care facility, with its honey brown wood floors and soft carpeting, beige and maroon walls and numerous wide windows.

The lobby feels like a living room. There are couches and other plush seating, coffee tables, an imposing stone fireplace and sun pouring in from two-story windows. The rooms, a mix of 240 private and semiprivate units, are simple and cozy, with twin beds, maroon bedding, flat-screen TVs, full bathrooms, chairs and windows.

On Thursday, the recorded sounds of a piano wafted throughout the 161,000-square-foot facility as officials hosted an open house. The new \$39 million space was dreamed up 10 years ago, said Martone, CEO of Capital Living and Rehabilitation Centres.

"One of the things we knew from our own experiences was that we wanted a building that felt like a home, but was functional for our staff," he said. "We were very tuned into where we put our supplies and where we positioned our staff so that they have quick ability to address any problems."

Capital Living will open the doors of the new facility Sept. 10. Residents will come from the company's two Schenectady County facilities — The Avenue and the Dutch Manor. Both sit on the plot of land where the new facility was constructed. The Avenue, a 154-bed nursing facility, sits on the Altamont Avenue side of the property and will be razed and used as green space once residents are transferred. The Dutch Manor, an 86-bed facility, sits on the Hamburg Street side of the property and will remain standing for any potential future use.

The company has added about two dozen new staffers to its employee roster of more than 300 to help run the larger facility.

Capital Living has eight facilities across the state, including ones in Rotterdam, Troy and Glens Falls. They all began as nursing homes, but were enhanced when the company assumed ownership in 2003 and offer specialty programs like nursing rehabilitation, falls prevention and physical, occupational and speech therapy, as well as podiatric, dental, ophthalmological and neurological services.

The decision to replace the two smaller facilities with one large facility on the site made plenty of sense to company officials long before the Affordable Care Act elevated the importance of skilled nursing facilities along the continuum of care. Residents stay in a facility when they need rehabilitative services after a hospital stay and can end up staying anywhere from a week to six months or more. About six years ago, staff began keeping track of all the things that sent patients back into the hospital.

"It wasn't their original diagnoses that were sending them back," said Martone. "It was the comorbidities that got triggered from the original event. So it's like a constant balancing act where you have a major acute episode and then all these other things start bubbling up and you've got to address them right away. Hospitals are not geared toward that because they're dealing with the acute episode and sending them back out. So we said, 'We've got to develop pathways that address that.' So now we're in more of a preventative mode."

One of the things that helps Capital Living do that is the bigger space and new equipment. In particular, an expansive physical therapy room on the first floor boasts impressive technology like Balance Engineering's Equilibrate System, which measures sway, alignment, foot orientation and more to help prevent future falls and injuries to elderly residents.

The new facility also has a special room to help transition residents back into home living. It contains a twin bed, nightstand, bathroom, kitchenette, couch, table and chairs that can be set up in a way most familiar to the patient. There, they can learn to get around and make their own food again and see how easy or difficult it is to make their own bed.

The facility also boasts some neat extras, like a spa room with a whirlpool and a beauty salon where residents can get manicures, pedicures and have their hair done for the day.

"We've always been in a different league," said Martone, as he moved from one room to another throughout the building Thursday. "We were gearing up to really address the future needs of older people a long time ago. We treat the clinically complex side of things, and I think that as things start to transition within the health care system, we're going to be asked to do a lot more a lot faster."

County officials gathered at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday evening to celebrate the long-awaited opening of the new facility. Schenectady Metroplex Development Authority Chairman Ray Gillen said the \$39 million private investment is the "single largest investment in the city of Schenectady since the new GE Battery Plant." "We are very grateful to Capital Living for this major commitment to Schenectady," he said.