



PROVIDED BY ST. JOSEPH OF THE PINES

Continuing-care retirement communities, such as Belle Meade in Southern Pines, offer seniors independent living, health care, multiple dining options and other amenities.

Golden years

More senior citizens are treasuring the amenities, such as on-site health care and recreation, offered at continuing-care retirement communities.

Elder-care experts tout studies that show seniors residing in a community live as many as seven years longer than those who remain alone in their home. But realizing those gains isn't always a straightforward proposition. "Unfortunately, after age 85, about half of people have memory issues," says Steve Kastner, president and CEO of Southern Pines-based senior-living provider St. Joseph of the Pines. Like many companies that provide housing

for older Americans, St. Joseph's has expanded care for those with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia at Belle Meade, its 100-acre senior-living community where about 300 residents live in 48 homes and 160 apartments. Fourteen memory-care apartments, specially trained staff, additional programs and tighter security give residents the care they need, including making sure they return home if they wander off or become disoriented.

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PROVIDED BY SPRINGMOOR

The 42-acre Springmoor continuing-care retirement community in northwest Raleigh offers about 400 independent-living units. Veteran developer Jud Ammons started Springmoor in the mid-1980s. It is a not-for-profit company led by an all-volunteer board.

Memory-care apartments are one retirement-living option for seniors. Many remain in their homes, receiving care from family or home-health aides. Some recent retirees choose to spend a few years enjoying an active lifestyle in an exotic destination before returning home or moving to a retirement community. Others need to live in a skilled-nursing home because they're too ill or fragile. One of the newest choices is continuing-care retirement communities, which combine the best from all the other options. In them, life is maintenance free, secure, independent and flush with amenities, including meals and increasing levels of health care as residents grow older.

There are nearly 60 CCRCs in North Carolina — including Belle Meade and its 100-resident sister community, Pine Knoll — and about 2,000 nationwide. Those numbers are expected to grow. The U.S. Census says there were 40.3 million citizens older than 65 in 2010, up

5.3% from 2000. It can cost a lot to live at a CCRC. Headquartered in Baltimore and Washington, D.C., the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services reported that about \$156 billion was spent on nursing-home and CCRC care in 2013. Some of that money is spent on CCRC entrance fees, which range from \$20,000 to \$800,000 in North Carolina, according to the state Department of Insurance, which tracks CCRC rates. On top of those, residents pay monthly fees, which range from \$1,500 to \$6,000. They guarantee a home and a corresponding level of medical care and services.

The required investment puts CCRCs out of financial reach for many seniors. Those who choose one are in the top 10% of their peers income-wise, says Brad Breeding, founder and president of MyLifeSite.com, which advises people on retirement options, and author of *What's the Deal with Retirement Communities?* Even then, many sell their home to pay the entrance fee.

There is a simple rule of thumb to determine if an individual or couple can afford a CCRC. Assets should be twice the entrance fee and monthly income should be 2 to 2.5 times the monthly fee, says Teresa Mize, an elder-care industry veteran and marketing director at The Cedars of Chapel Hill, a Triangle-region CCRC.

It is seen as money well spent by many seniors, who enjoy a retirement experience unimaginable to their parents. CCRCs offer spas, massage services, gyms, pools and other recreational opportunities that meet the wellness and fitness demands of today's seniors. Belle Meade and Pine Knoll residents, for example, can play unlimited golf at seven local courses for a \$60 monthly fee, Kastner says. And although golf isn't the No. 1 attraction for residents — many are retired from nearby military bases or are drawn to St. Joseph's affiliation with Sisters of Providence religious order — it's a favorite perk. Seniors' discrimi-

nating palates are sated at bistro and café-style dining options that stock salad bars and serve low-fat, vegetarian and vegan meals. Kastner says any St. Joseph of the Pines resident can eat meals at Belle Meade or Pine Knolls, and a deal with Pinehurst Resort opens its restaurants to them, too. Seniors also want educational and cultural opportunities, whether on-site or in a nearby community. St. Joseph of the Pines, for example, partnered with Pinehurst-based Sandhills Community College to create The Lifelong Learning Institute, which schedules seminars, performances, lectures and other educational events.

Most North Carolina CCRCs are in the Charlotte, Triad and Triangle regions. The coast and mountains, once seen as desirable retirement locations, only have a few. That doesn't surprise industry experts. They say many seniors choose a retirement community near their adult children, who likely are living and working in cities. CCRCs also need nurses and physicians, and both are easier to recruit in metros. "It's really about the economics all around than the destination itself," Breeding says. About 70% of residents hail from within 25 miles of their CCRC, he says. The CCRC that Bill Sears and his father, John, chose was even closer to home.

The Sears family has lived on the same 75 acres of land in Cary for more than 150 years. When John got older, he wanted to stay in the area, but he needed easy access to health care and social amenities. That was the spark for SearStone, a CCRC near the upscale Preston community, which has homes, a golf course, office space and retail. SearStone opened in 2013, making it one of the newest CCRCs in the state. It experienced the fastest fill-up period in the industry's 100-year history in North Carolina. Pent-up demand was a contributing factor; marketing for the project began in 2005, but Bill, who was its developer, tabled construction when capital dried up during the recession.

Today, John, who is in his 90s, and his wife, Maggie Belle, along with Bill and his wife, Rita, are among SearStone's 250 residents. They're spread among 169 residences, a mix of duplex-style homes and apartments. Skilled nursing care is provided in a "health care neighborhood," reflecting a trend toward taking it from an institutional to home setting. SearStone is not alone. A growing number of CCRCs provide

home-care services as an alternative to the assisted-living stage of the continuum, allowing seniors to remain in their independent-living units longer.

Salemtowne — an ecumenical, 171-unit community of about 340 residents that's associated with the Moravian Church — is one of the larger CCRCs in the Triad. In addition to its independent-living units, it has 46 assisted-living units and an 84-bed skilled nursing

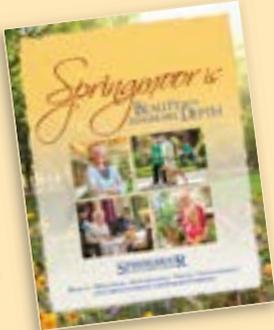
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center in northwest Winston-Salem. Construction is underway on a health-care community that will further de-institutionalize health care for seniors. The community will feature three 20-room “households” — each featuring skilled nursing care, private rooms, living and dining rooms, a cook-to-order kitchen and courtyard — plus a 40-bed transitional rehabilitation center and a 20-room assisted living memory-care household. “When this development is complete, our current skilled-nursing center will be converted into assisted-living residences,” CEO Mark Steele says. “New independent living is currently being explored, as is master planning for our entire 116-acre plus campus.”

Plantation Estates in Matthews is beginning a \$95 million expansion. Forty-five acres of land have been cleared for 20 one-story villas and 126 independent-living apartments. Construction will begin this year, says Jim

Petty, mid-south region vice president for Plantation Estates’ owner, West Point, Pa.-based ACTS Retirement Communities Inc. The new units will complement the CCRC’s 359 independent-living apartments, which range from studio to three-bedrooms. It also offers continuing-care accommodations: 60 assisted-living suites and 80 skilled-care beds. Interest among prospective residents — who are younger than is typical in the industry, with some being in their late 60s — is high, he says. “We have several floor plans and options that are completely sold out [as of November 2015], and we anticipate that all floor plans will be reserved very soon.”

Plantation Estates is scheduled to begin building a 100-bed skilled-nursing center next year. Once that is open, the existing skilled-nursing center will be renovated and repurposed into additional assisted-living residences.

Additional apartments and villas also may be added at that time, Petty says.

Cypress of Raleigh opened in 2008, the height of the Great Recession. But what many might consider poor timing was actually a good fit with its business model, says Marc Puntereri, managing member of Hilton Head Island, S.C.-based Cypress Group LLC, which operates the Raleigh site and other CCRCs in Charlotte and South Carolina. Unlike most CCRCs, where residents’ entrance fees entitle them to lifetime residence rights, Cypress residents purchase homes on its campus. That shared financial responsibility allows the company to operate debt-free, he says. The equity model also is attractive to municipalities. Although all CCRCs boost local economies by hiring hundreds of people, those that have residents own their homes add more to the tax base. Cypress of Raleigh, which has 205 residential units and a 36-bed skilled nursing home, adds \$150 million to the local tax base, Puntereri says. That amount will increase, because the community is planning a \$60 million, two-phase expansion that will add 115 residential units.

The Cedars of Chapel Hill is the senior-living component of Meadowmont Community, which features homes, shops, medical offices and restaurants in a park-like setting that’s minutes from UNC Chapel Hill. About 300 residents live in 83 cottages, villas and apartment homes, and its skilled-nursing center has 48 beds. Like Cypress of Raleigh, it operates under an equity model. It also has its own twist, says Teresa Mize, Cedars’ marketing director: It runs a home health-care agency. Residents can, on a fee-for-service basis, receive personal care and minor medical attention from a Cedars-trained home-health employee, she says. The Cedars, which lacks room for expansion, has an occupancy rate near 100%. New residents wait up to a year to move in.



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