

Services at senior-living communities give residents more time for leisure

By ALICE ADAMS
Senior Living Correspondent

When Lois McCall decided it was time to leave her home of 40 years and move to Houston's Treemont Retirement Community, she expected a comfortable apartment and freedom from planning and cooking meals.

"I was sick of trying to plan meals, and I wasn't eating well. My home had become too big to handle," she said, "I didn't need all that space and any time I wanted to leave town, there were too many arrangements to make. All in all, it was too much for me to keep up, and I decided it was time to be free of all that stuff that's not worth the worry."

McCall, a vivacious octogenarian, said she had looked at one or two other communities before visiting Treemont and walking into the apartment she has now.

"Almost instantly I knew I could live

here happily. It just had the feel of home, and was so clean it passed my daughter-in-law's inspection and she's a surgical nurse," McCall said.

"Since I've been here, I feel like I have a whole new life. I think my late husband would have loved it here, too."

Relieved of the responsibilities of house cleaning, maintenance and meal preparation, McCall joins the legions of Houstonians who have opted to move into the growing number of senior communities spreading across the greater Houston landscape that offer amenities that free residents of many responsibilities.

When seniors come to a senior community, they find they suddenly have more time to pursue hobbies and other interests as well as more opportunities to make new friends and enjoy social events," said Jamie Robertson, executive director of The Village of Tanglewood, another Houston senior community.

Geneva Pickle, for example, moved into The Village of Tanglewood two years ago.

"I just love it here," she said, adding she still maintains her home in Palestine and goes back often for visits and family get-togethers.

"My son lives in Sugar Land, and I have nieces who visit me though the people who live here and the staff are just wonderful ... some of the best you'll ever find and there's always something to do, whether it's the Saturday morning Bible class, which is well-attended, or the movies or the great entertainment they bring here. I'm so busy, I have to keep a calendar," she said, "and my family says they have to make an appointment to call me since I'm always involved."

In fact, researchers have found active, involved seniors such as McCall and Pickle are healthier, happier and enjoy life more than those who remain somewhat socially isolated.

Participating in a variety of hobbies is helpful to seniors such as Clem Kalupa, who moved to Treemont 18 months ago after a serious automobile accident, followed by a stroke.

"I began woodworking as a child and learned to whittle from a partially disabled war veteran who helped with the family farm," said Kalupa, a retired electrical engineer who now spends time woodworking for fun and therapy as well.

"I never had time to do anything like woodworking until I was in the recovery

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about the cons," he said. "The cons are the maintenance and upkeep on the

said. "Then, you have to check the credit score to see if they are credit wor-

said.
Simmons can be reached at 713-784-0888.

SERVICES: A break from housework can mean more time for friends, entertainment



RODOLFO HERNANDEZ PHOTO

SHARING STORIES: Treemont resident Lois McCall writes the "Meet Your Neighbor" profile for the community's newsletter. She says the time she spent cooking or running errands now goes to new priorities.

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facility after the accident and my stroke," Kalupa said.

"It just happened one of the other patients was a former sales rep for Dremel Tools. He taught me the rudiments of woodworking, showed me examples and shared hundreds of pages of information from the manufacturer. I organized that information into how-to, patterns and instructions, and then went to work, becoming fascinated with what could emerge from a block of wood."

The avid hobbyist spends some of his free time working under the shade of Treemont's outdoor gazebo that's equipped for power tools or doing intricate hand-finishing in his spacious apartment.

Kalupa makes toy cars, trains, planes and helicopters with moving parts, as well as different animals, chipped and carved from blocks of wood.

"I prefer walnut," he said, "for painted pieces, I use whatever's handy."

He also carves small decorative crosses as well as designing projects on request. "One of our residents asked me to carve some owls," he said. "She's an alumna of Rice University and gives these owls as gifts to her friends."

Hobbies help many cope with the stresses of life, and Kalupa said his woodworking has helped him maintain his dexterity and saved his hands from arthritis.

He acknowledges his hobby keeps him physically active as well as mentally stimulated.

McCall agreed. A long-time Bible teacher who once conducted book reviews at the Shamrock Hilton, she began a Bible class at Treemont, which has attracted a large group. She also writes "Meet Your Neighbor" profiles about Treemont residents for the community's newsletter, "The Tattler."

"It's been so rewarding for me," she said, "because everybody has a story, and almost everyone enjoys sharing theirs."

She is pleased with the

new priorities of her life.

"I no longer constantly run errands and have the precious time I once spent gathering and preparing something to eat and then eating my meals alone. Now I eat with congenial people in pleasant surroundings, choosing what I want and having other people gathering and preparing the meal," she said.

"I have complete freedom from the drudgery of everyday home management, (and have) the availability of planned entertainment and scores of new friends. My only issue is having to choose from among the many activities available so I won't be too busy for other things."

Those "other things" include serving on the board of Bible Study International, traveling and enjoying the arts activities of Houston.