

## A CONVERSATION WITH



**Brenda Roberts,**  
Michigan Assisted  
Living Association

**Brenda Roberts** is director of quality assurance and education at the Livonia-based **Michigan Assisted Living Association**, which provides advocacy and education for assisted living providers. She spoke with reporter **Sherri Welch** about trends in assisted living.

**How have assisted living services changed in the past five to 10 years?**  
The whole concept of aging in place — people are coming to us at a more advanced age. The trend is that folks are waiting until they are older and more frail until they seek assisted living ... and saying to providers this is the last move they want to make. So our assisted living agencies are working much more closely with home health care and hospice agencies to make that one move a reality.

**Are there more partnerships forming around assisted living communities? Why?** Absolutely. It's centered around keeping people in their apartment or assisted living community or their residence. Assisted living homes with smaller campuses (in particular are) bringing in supportive services so people can stay in that home for life. Those services include home health care, skilled services, rehab services, post-hospital services, hospice agencies and pharmacies.

**Any other trends in assisted living?**  
We're not institutionalizing people anymore. We've learned seniors are vital and have the ability to continue to give and to gain from the community. The operators are ... tailoring their community engagement opportunities to individual interests. One woman who came in used to get flowers from the funeral home and rearrange them for homebound seniors. The assisted living community she lives in never did that before. Now, other ladies come down and help her with the flower arranging, and when someone is homebound or sick in their apartments, they deliver flowers.

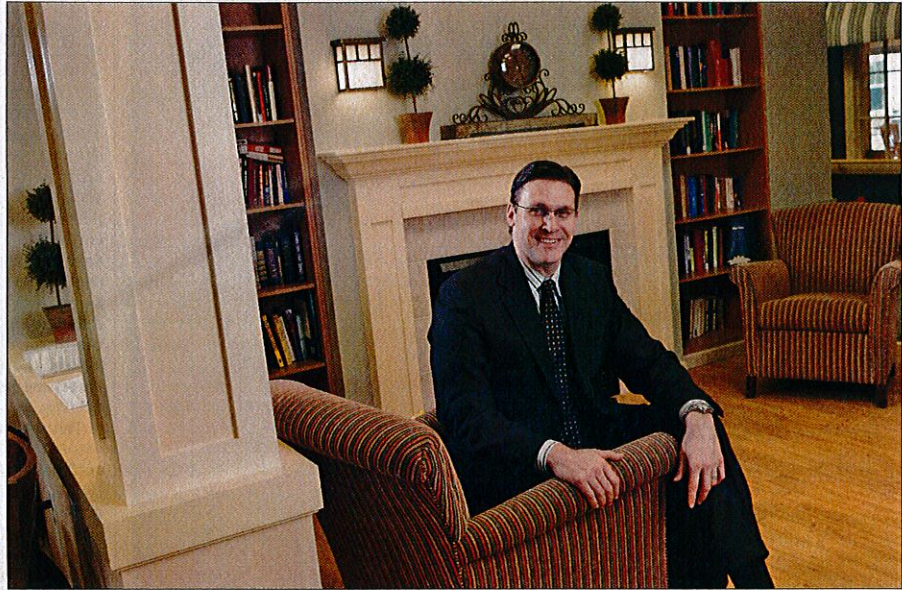
**Are the assisted living centers increasingly leveraging more types of funding?** Assisted living has been traditionally a private-pay industry. Only those people with resources had been able to access that as an option. Now there are waiver programs that take traditional Medicaid dollars that paid for nursing home care and (pay) for other options such as assisted living services and home- and community-based health care and social services. People still living in their own homes may face a waiver waiting list to get assisted living services in their own home. But if they are in a nursing home, the money is readily available to help you transition out to another setting. It's providing the choice they want, and at the same time it saves the state money.

If you know someone interesting in nonprofits or services **Sherri Welch** should interview, call (313) 446-1694 or write sbegin@crain.com



# FOCUS

## ASSISTED LIVING



Executive Director **Mike McCormick** of Fox Run in Novi says the depressed housing market leaves many seniors needing a boost to get into assisted living.

# Nursing the business model

*In tough economy, assisted living sector gets creative, eases prices*

BY MARTI BENEDETTI  
SPECIAL TO  
CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

**A** still-lagging real estate market and competition among Detroit-area assisted living facilities have created monetary incentives and more choices for potential residents and their caretakers.

Local assisted living center executives said the business model is being affected by local and national trends: The tough economy and the glut of homes for sale have made it challenging for some seniors to sell their homes at a price they think is fair.

Adjusting to the market has required creativity and, in some cases, discounts.

**Mike McCormick**, executive director of the **Fox Run** community in Novi, said residents are middle to upper-middle income, and the center has been affected by seniors selling their homes for less than what they expected — or not being able to sell at all. So it has an on-premises real estate agent to help prospective customers sell their house. Additionally, depending on the location of the living unit, the center will shave a couple of hundred dollars off the monthly fee for one to three years.

**Fox Run**, owned by Baltimore-based **Erickson Living**, re-

quires a \$99,000 entrance deposit, refundable when the resident moves out or dies; the deposit is paid back 30 days after somebody else moves in.

Additionally, residents pay an average of \$6,000 a month, with the specific costs varying widely depending on the level of care needed.

Assisted living refers specifically to centers that provide a place to live with medical care, meals and activities. It is not the same as independent living, which is for those who need little or no medical assis-

tance.

Often, a senior living community offers both, along with skilled nursing, which involves a more expensive, higher level of medical care.

West Bloomfield-based **Singh Senior Living**, owners and managers of **Waltonwood** centers, has seven properties in Michigan and one in North Carolina. **Earl Parker**, vice president of senior living for **Singh**, agreed customer perceptions and requirements are changing.

"The economy is giving people more of a fear that their

money is not going to last through retirement, and selling their home is hard, so they put off moving for one more year," he said.

Often, community-based support resources can help keep people in their homes longer with use of home health care professionals and telemedicine, said **Thom Hosinski**, COO of Southfield-based **Presbyterian Villages of Michigan** and vice president and executive director of its **Village of Redford** property.

"Because of health care reform and rising costs, we will see this more," he said.

But when seniors are ready, they also increasingly expect housing operators to be flexible and offer a high level of care.

**Waltonwood** does not require an entrance fee and charges, on average, \$4,000 a month for assisted living. Because the Detroit market is competitive, the center is offering rent reduction incentives on some of its properties, depending on location, **Parker** said.

**Presbyterian Villages of Michigan**, meanwhile, does not charge an entrance fee. Its monthly costs, which include medical help, meals and activities, average \$2,500. It has 25 centers in Michigan with vari-

## Senior residents go high-tech

Technology is changing the game with assisted living residents' entertainment offerings and safety measures.

While they still might pass the time with bridge or bingo, assisted living residents also are playing **Wii Fitness** and **Wii Bowling**, video games and logging time on their computers.

"IPads are great for them and easier to use than computers," said **Thom Hosinski**, **Presbyterian Villages of Michigan** COO and vice president and executive director of its **Village of Redford** property.

Seniors also are **Skyping** as a way to keep in touch with their families, said **Brenda**

**Roberts**, director of quality assurance and education for the **Michigan Assisted Living Association**, a trade association for nonprofit and for-profit assisted living centers. And cameras in the hallways of assisted living centers help staff keep track of residents.

Telemedicine includes electronic medical devices that help seniors live easier. It could be a mechanism to remind seniors to take their medicine and dispense the appropriate amount of pills, or a device worn by seniors that allows them to signal for help if they are in distress.

— Marti Benedetti

# Assisted living: Success requires added biz care

■ From Page 9

ous cost structures and services.

Hosinski said residents coming into assisted living are older and more frail, and have fewer assets than they had a few years ago.

"They need a higher level of care," he said.

The average age of residents in assisted living facilities in 2009 was 86.9 years old. Seventy-four percent are female, according to a report by the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, the American Senior Housing Association, the Assisted Living Federation of America, the National Center for Assisted Living and the National Investment Center for the Seniors Housing and Care Industry.

Ten years ago, the average age was 80.

"The amount of care and the type of amenities are more expansive than ever before," said Joanne Robinson, senior vice president of operations at Presbyterian Villages of Michigan.

"The major influences for the changes in this field are the adult children — baby boomers — who have high expectations," Robinson said.

Erickson and Ford Land also developed the Henry Ford Village center in Dearborn, which provides a full continuum of care. Henry Ford Village is owned by a nonprofit board. In December, its management company changed from Erickson Living to Des Moines-based Life Care Services LLC.

Henry Ford Village is reviewing its cost structure for assisted living and expects changes in the coming year, said Adam Sterling, center sales director.

Currently, it charges a \$99,000 refundable entrance fee. Its range of fees for assisted living is \$3,892 to \$5,863 a month depending on the amount of care a resident needs. The average rate is \$5,253, meaning most residents need a good deal of care.

Brenda Roberts, director of quality assurance and education for the Michigan Assisted Living Association, a trade association for nonprofit and for-profit assisted living centers, said despite the pressure on operators because of the state's economy, the industry in Michigan is generally healthy.

Overall occupancy levels are stable, although she has seen a slowing of the development of new facilities. Some Michigan operators are building in other states in the interim (See story, Page 11) or are working on creative collaborations to leverage incentives and credits.

A new \$35 million senior community that Presbyterian Villages is developing near Detroit's east riverfront will include not only independent living, residential nursing home units and affordable assisted living, but also a second site for Henry Ford Health

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Joanne Robinson, Presbyterian Villages of Michigan

System's Center for Senior Independence.

The center provides both onsite and offsite care and services to those who are nursing home-eligible but prefer to age in their own home and community. Those services could include not only health care but assistance with bathing and access to hair appointments and social functions at the center, or even help doing the laundry at home.

"We're able to keep (seniors) out of a nursing home by providing those services, which the state has said ultimately improves one's quality of life and reduces the cost of health care," said John Polanski, president and CEO for community care services at Henry Ford.

The project is also mindful of the cost burden to seniors and their families.

United Methodist Retirement Communities won funding from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority for the affordable assisted living component of the project as the second of five pilot sites selected for state funding, following another built by Genesis Nonprofit Housing Corp. in Grand Rapids.

Monthly lease rates haven't yet been set, Presbyterian Villages said, but they will be subsidized in exchange for the MSDHA funding.

Centers that offer a range of care — while providing a home-like atmosphere — are in demand, McCormick said. Fox Run has onsite physicians, a bank, store, restaurants and a 250-seat performance art center.

Its social outlets are extensive. "The real problem for seniors is when it is seven degrees outside and they can't leave their homes and they begin to feel isolated. They can talk on the phone, but that has its limitations. Socialization opportunities are underestimated, but paramount," McCormick said.

"What technology doesn't bring is human contact," Hosinski said. "Assisted living provides relationships and meaningful activities."

Sherri Welch contributed to this story.

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# CRAIN'S LIST: LARGEST SENIOR-LIVING FACILITIES

Ranked by number of senior-living units

	Facility Address Phone; website	Top executive	Total number of senior-living units	Monthly rental rate range	Average/ minimum age	Amenities
1.	<b>Henry Ford Village</b> 15101 Ford Road, Dearborn 48126 (313) 584-1000; www.henryfordvillage.com	Stan Clouse executive director	953	\$821	78 62	All-season pool, fitness and wellness center, on-site Comerica Bank branch, medical center, convenience store, restaurants and cafe, landscaped grounds, 24-hour security, local transportation, computer lab, billiards/game room, music and craft rooms, performing arts venue, multifith chapel
2.	<b>Fox Run</b> 41000 W. 13 Mile Road, Novi 48377 (248) 668-8600; www.ericsoncommunities.com	Michael McCormick executive director	800	\$1,525-\$2,628	80 62	All-season pool, fitness and wellness center, on-site Comerica Bank branch, medical center, convenience store, restaurant and cafe, landscaped grounds, 24-hour security, computer labs, billiards/game room, music room, craft room, performing arts theater, worship center
3.	<b>The Baptist Manor</b> 30301 W. 13 Mile Road, Farmington Hills 48334 (248) 626-6100; www.thebaptistmanor.org	Elizabeth Goleski executive director	546	NA	NA	On-site doctors office, 24-hour security, independent living, assisted living, and subsidized housing
4.	<b>Fountains of Franklin</b> 28301 Franklin Road, Southfield 48034 (248) 353-2810; www.watermarkcommunities.com	Cathy Lubanski administrator	347	\$1,600-\$3,800	65 52 Ⓞ	One- and two-bedroom residences, kitchenette, housekeeping, quest accommodations, scheduled local transportation, fitness and social programs, others
5.	<b>Chelsea Retirement Community</b> 805 W. Middle St., Chelsea 48118 (734) 475-8633; www.umrc.com	John Thouhauer CEO and president	275	NA	NA	Health promotion and exercise programs; security; transportation service; 24-hour care; social and recreational programs; utilities; assistance with laundry, dressing and bathing; housekeeping
6.	<b>The Village of Redford Senior Living Community</b> 25330 W. Six Mile Road, Redford Township 48240 (313) 531-6874; www.pvm.org	Thomas Hosinski vice president and executive director Lisa Maxwell administrator	268	starts at \$995	80 55	Resident computer labs, social events, performing arts and crafts rooms, libraries, fitness centers, private dining rooms, game room, mini-theater, sundry stores, salon/barber shops, courtyard with fountain, chapel, walking trails
7.	<b>Glacier Hills Senior Living Community</b> 1200 Earhart Road, Ann Arbor 48105 (734) 769-6410; www.glacierhills.org	Ray Rabadoux president and CEO	220	NA	NA 62	Fine dining, concierge service, gift shop, beauty salon/barbershop, library, interfaith chapel, wellness center, housekeeping and laundry, and comprehensive life enrichment programs
8.	<b>Waltonwood Twelve Oaks</b> 27475 Huron Circle, Novi 48377 (248) 735-1500; www.SinghSeniorLiving.com	Steven Tyshka director of operations, Michigan Waltonwood Communities	219	Varies	NA	One- and two-bedroom apartment homes, fully equipped kitchens, patio/balcony, bath with shower stall cushioned bench and hand rails, 24-hour emergency call system, continental breakfast and dinner reviewed by a dietician, housekeeping, fitness room, transportation available, others
9.	<b>The Village of Oakland Woods Senior Living Community</b> 420 S. Opdyke Road, Pontiac 48341 (248) 334-4379; pvm.org	Heike Scott administrator	216	NA	NA 62	Wellness program, nurse on-site two days a week, senior nutrition site, full-time social worker, washer/dryer hookup, scheduled weekly shopping trips, mini-bus, wellness center, individual patio or front porch, private entrances, others
10.	<b>The Heritage of Southfield</b> 25800 W. 11 Mile Road, Southfield 48034 (248) 727-2000; www.brookdaleliving.com	Rochelle Rothwell Reneker executive director	215	\$1,795-\$4,025	84 62	Respite available; short-term stays; speech, physical and occupational therapy

This list encompasses senior-living complexes in Livingston, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Wayne counties that include independent living and licensed and unlicensed assisted living that include customized levels of assistance and services to senior residents. It is not a complete list, but it is the most comprehensive available.

Ⓞ Dependent on individual assessment.

LIST RESEARCHED BY ANNE MARKS AND PATRICE BUSHART