

NEWS AND COMMENTARY

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IN LANCASTER COUNTY, PA.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2008

Conestoga View appears in good hands

As part of our ongoing reporting on various Lancaster organizations, **NewsLanc** visited Conestoga View to see how the nursing home has been doing since the controversial 2005 sale by the county to its proprietary operator.

As Administrator Jennifer Zufall and Business Development Specialist Joni Bockey led a tour of the public areas and a residential floor, there was a positive impression with the size, scope, cleanliness, lack of odor, and overall professionalism of the operation.

According to their physical condition and preference, residents are fed in a pleasant dining room, in common areas on their floors, or in their rooms.

In addition to having 446 beds, with a current 98.89% occupancy rate, there is a cafeteria and snack bar with many options, several lounge areas, recreational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy, modern bathrooms with whirlpool baths that stimulate muscle development, cable television access, internet access, an on-site barber shop, a chapel, and more. Virtually all services are on demand and without additional charge.

A small percentage of the patients pay directly at rates that vary but average about \$1500 per week.

But most revenue comes from a combination of Medicaid/Medicare and private insurance.

Private pay constitutes only about 4% of the cost of care, says Zufall.

If some were concerned about budget cuts and declining quality under private management, those fears appear to have been unfounded.

Zufall says that staff levels have actually been maintained or increased since 2005. There are some 650 employees in total.

She says that one of the first things they did upon taking over was provide cable television for the residents. Other equipment such as lifts have also been added.

At one point during the tour of a residential corridor, a high pitched sound was audible. Bockey explained that it is a "*terror alarm*," which alerts staff when a relatively non-mobile resident suddenly moves in such a way that might indicate that they have fallen or are trying to stand up. This enables a staff member to provide assistance.

Another impressive technological innovation was a fingerprint-accessed information console on the wall in each corridor. Staff enter updates after every service provided to residents.

Residents generally get referred to Conestoga View by one of the hospitals or by other social service agencies, Zufall explained. Most of them then stay for the rest of their lives.

But not all of their residents are necessarily elderly. Some simply have significant disabilities. They have residents as young as 18.

NewsLanc had downloaded from the Internet and reviewed with them their 2007 evaluation by the State Department of Health, which indicated no significant violations. Another report indicated that their nursing care time per patient is slightly above the national average.

Zuffall says she has an inviting attitude with regard to public inspections. "*We'd rather be honest with them, and proactive with them, and use them as a resource*," she said.

Zuffall has been Administrator of Conestoga since 2006 and has worked in the healthcare industry since 2004. She is a graduate of King's College in Wilkes-Barre with a degree in Healthcare Administration and is currently working towards a Master's at Penn State.

Conestoga View was sold to Complete Healthcare Resources (CHR) in 2005 during the tenure of Commissioners Shaub, Shellenberger, and Henderson. At the time there was concern by some members of the public that treatment at the facility would deteriorate as a result of the sale.