# Worth County Convalescent Center

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I recently visited Worth County Convalescent Center, which is a 50-bed, not-for-profit, County-owned, Skilled Nursing Facility located in a rural community (Grant City) in the Northwest corner of the state. As you can see by the sign on the front door, the building was constructed in 1970 and is similar in design to most homes built in that era, with three wings that converge at the nurses' station.

You don't have to go far to start getting the feeling of home. Like most rural homes, there is a lazy dog that hangs around the front door looking for a scrap of food or a pat on the head. Smiley just showed up one day and made himself at home. Who can blame him? You can tell by looking at him that he is definitely living the good life. Residents and staff alike ensure that he lacks for nothing. During a recent cold spell, some residents brought personal clothing items out to ensure that he was warm enough.

The front lobby is furnished with easy chairs, a television, and a grandfather clock. The fireplace mantle was decorated for Easter. It is more than an area to show off for visitors, it is in almost constant use by residents.

In some respects, the home is still in the early stages of their culture change journey. In other ways, they are way down the road.

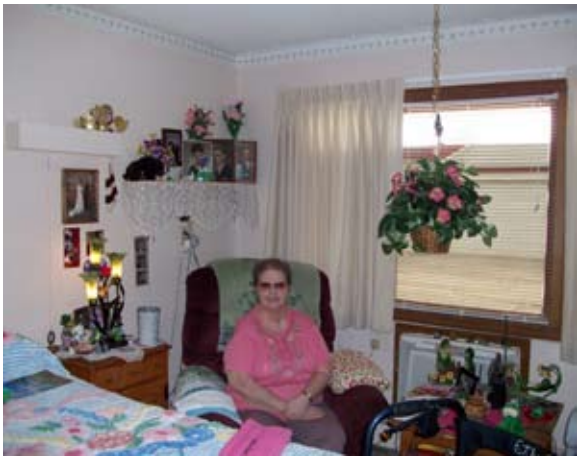
They have:

- A Culture Change Committee, with a representative from each department.
- Named neighborhoods with some fresh painting and decorating.
- A salad cart in the dining room, with a soup of the week.
- Added table cloths to the dining tables and transitioned from “clothing protectors” (bibs) to linen napkins.
- Wireless internet for residents who wish to use it.

Their next steps include implementing self waking, open dining, and resident-directed bathing schedules. They are making plans for other changes, such as revamping the nursing station to make it smaller and more open and accessible.

Residents were getting ready to practice balloon volleyball in preparation for their journey to St. Joseph to compete in the Golden Age Games the next day. While they do have an overhead paging system, it is only used in unusual circumstances. They also have an audible call system, but I heard very little out of it while I was visiting.

Physical structure is part of culture change, but the real proof is found in the residents who live there. I met two residents who shared with me how their lives are impacted by person-centered care. Resident Doyle Hughes enjoys gardening. In fact, he designed and cares for the flower garden that is located near the front entrance of the building. Unfortunately, it was too early in the year for anything to be growing yet. However, he did show off some of the lawn ornaments that he painted for the garden. He was anxiously awaiting warmer weather so he could get back in the garden and get things growing again. In addition to the flower garden that Doyle tends, last year they also had a resident vegetable garden. The vegetables were prepared in the kitchen and shared by all. This year they are putting in a raised garden to improve resident accessibility.



I also met Etha Pearl Ray. Etha Pearl, like many of the residents, has lived in Worth County all her life. She moved into Worth County Convalescent Center 5 ½ years ago. Her husband was also a resident, until his death. Etha Pearl is very proud of her room. She has always been a particular housekeeper. She does all her own housework, except for wet mopping and cleaning the toilet. She showed me her frog collection and told me about her grandson giving her first one to her 33 years ago (Kermit). Recently, her son told her she was going to have to quit buying frogs. She informed him that she hadn't bought a frog in years; friends and staff members give them to her. When she moved in, she brought her frog lawn ornaments, which can be seen in the front flower garden. Etha Pearl is the home's reining Valentine Queen. Her tiara is prominently displayed on her curio shelf along with her highly esteemed frogs.

While touring with Administrator Karen Fletchall, I noticed flowers, a poem, and a Bible on the bed in a vacant resident room. She explained to me that for a period of time after a resident dies, they generally put a display on the deceased resident's bed, which usually includes a photo of the resident and some things that meant something to the resident. They also have a memorial on a bulletin board, where residents can post memories.

What I found to be the most impressive was how involved the home is in the local community.
The school donated a computer for resident use. The Women's Auxiliary donated a popcorn maker. Parades come by the home. Elementary school children interview residents and develop PowerPoint presentations, which they show to the residents at the completion of the assignment. High School Prom participants parade through the home and are judged in several categories by the residents. Residents go on outings to participate in community events, such as the local rodeo. The community Easter egg hunt is held at the home. Their activity room is available to the community; and they serve as a community storm shelter.

Keep up the good work Worth County!