

In December 2011, I visited the Mary Culver Home, which is a 28-resident, state-licensed-only, intermediate care home, located in Kirkwood. The Mary Culver Home is a not-for-profit home operated by a private operating foundation, which serves women who are blind, low vision, or legally blind.

The home has an interesting history that dates back to 1866, when the Blind Girls' Home was established by a group of young blind women. The original residents made door mats and brooms and also collected alms to support the home.

In 1903, wealthy St. Louis resident, Mary Culver, built a 50-private-bedroom mansion for the girls on land donated by the St. Louis Christian Home. Then in 1966, the current home was built to replace the Paige Avenue Mansion and it became a licensed long-term care home. They later changed their name to the Mary Culver Home, in honor of Mrs. Culver. They still have articles of decoration and furniture donated from Mrs. Culver's private home, as well as artifacts from the Paige Avenue Mansion.



Portrait of the Blind Girls' Home (Paige Avenue Mansion)



Photo of Mary Culver donated from her private home

They have a culture change team and also participate with Missouri's culture change coalition, [MCS](#). Person-centered care is particularly important at the Mary Culver Home, since all of the residents are visually impaired. Each resident has a private room. Room numbers are displayed with raised letters and door decorations help residents identify their rooms. Laundry staff members help by putting matching clothes on hangers together. Rotary phones are provided to help residents with dialing.

Residents may have their own pets if they choose. While I was there, one resident had a cat. They have self-contained neighborhoods with consistent staffing assignments. There is no overhead paging. There is no institutional nurses' station. There is a kitchen available for resident/family use. There are also special areas for visiting, such as the Cozy Café and the activity room. There is a community refrigerator for resident use or they can have their own personal refrigerators if they wish.



Nurses' Work Area

They try to listen to what the residents want and accommodate them. Food items that the residents choose are stocked. There are several items which are always available, such as soup, salads, grilled cheese, and BLT sandwiches. Their dining hours have been extended. Many residents are now choosing to sleep in and have breakfast delivered to them in the Cozy Café, where they enjoy it in their pajamas and robes.



Cozy Café

They have two activity directors and many activities. The residents particularly enjoy cooking and food themed activities, such as soup nights; chocolate, tea, or coffee tastings; and baking homemade bread. Around Halloween, they carved pumpkins and toasted and ate the seeds. Administrator Colleen Hill recently went to Hawaii. She brought back many souvenirs and had a Hawaii vacation activity. They also enjoy their gardens with scented plants and herbs.



Mary Culver Home entrance and plants

Residents' family members and community volunteers are very involved in life at the home. Local musicians come in and give performances. A massage therapist comes in and gives massages. They have a gift shop stocked with donated items that makes approximately \$1,200.00 per year that is used to fund outings and equipment for resident use.



Gift Shop

For Christmas, the home buys each resident a gift. In the past, staff members also volunteered to sponsor residents and provide them with Christmas gifts. Because they were concerned about the poor economy and the burden on the employees, they thought they would discontinue the practice. However, the staff members asked for it to be reinstated. There was so much participation that some staff members complained that all the residents were taken and they could not participate. They had to limit each staff member to only sponsoring one resident.

They recently had their annual staff Christmas party. One resident's family sponsored the party and provided a meal catered by a local barbeque restaurant. Another family, of a resident who recently passed away, gave each employee \$100.00.*

During my visit, I met CNA Pamela Bullock. Ms. Bullock was born and raised in St. Louis. She previously had a career in the field of finance. After caring for her mother and father in their latter years, she developed a passion for caring for the elderly, which she now refers to as a

calling. She feels that she has a special understanding, based on her experience with her parents.

Ms. Bullock has worked at the Mary Culver Home for one year. She said it is a great home and she likes working there. She didn't know what they could do to improve. She particularly likes the fact that residents can make their own choices. They care about the ladies and work hard to make it home for them. They make sure the ladies' needs are taken care of.

She told me how difficult resident deaths are and how touched she was by how they are handled. The staff members walk with the body to the front door and say a prayer. She said deaths are so sad because they get so attached to the residents.

She was particularly complimentary of the activity staff and all the activities, especially the fact that they have activity staff there on weekends. She likes that they make a big deal of residents' birthdays. She also likes the new Cozy Café that is open all the time. Family members bring food in and spend time with the residents in the café.

I also met resident Ida Eaves. Ms. Eaves is 93-years-old. She was born in Desoto, MO in 1918. Her family owned a farm on the Big River. They sold the farm and moved to St. Louis when she was 4 ½ years old. Her father was killed by a young driver when he was only 64-years-old. She had one sister, who has since passed away. Her room is decorated with a picture of her sister that is 95-years-old.



Resident Ida Eaves



Portrait of Resident Eaves' sister displayed in her room

Ms. Eaves graduated high school in University City. She took night classes at Washington University and St. Louis University. She began working in an office as a stenographer. She later became the secretary to the president and CEO of an insurance company, a job that she held until she retired.

She was in her 20's during World War II and spent a lot of time volunteering at the USO. They had orchestras and she danced with the soldiers. She also worked behind the counter serving soft drinks. She typed letters for the soldiers. She even sewed a button on a uniform once.

She didn't learn to drive until she was 40-years-old and her first car was a 1956 Chevrolet. She had to give up driving and sold her car when she was 87, which she said referred to as "the worst thing."

She enjoyed traveling, especially by bus. She also enjoyed handwork and reading, but can't do either any longer because she has lost her vision. She has lived at the Mary Culver home almost

two years. She really enjoys music, especially from the 1940s and 1950s. Her favorite activities are the musicians who come in to entertain them. She also enjoys popcorn, and the donuts that are served every Wednesday morning.

She tries to maintain as much independence as possible. The aides get her clothes out for her, but she dresses herself. She said she has very good aides and they do a good job. She also said they are very cautious to make sure she gets the care she needs.

* [19 CSR 30-88.020](#) (13) *Any owner, operator, manager, employee or affiliate of an owner or operator receiving personal property or anything with a value of ten dollars (\$10) or more from a resident shall make a written statement giving the date of receipt, estimated value and the name of the person making the gift. These statements shall be retained by the operator and made available to the Department of Social Services or Department of Mental Health as appropriate and to the resident, his/her designee or legal guardian. In one (1) calendar year, no owner, operator, manager, employee or affiliate of an owner or operator shall receive from resident's personal property or anything of value over one hundred dollars (\$100). II/III*