

NORTHWEST HERALD

Deer Path of Huntley offers options for disabled adults

By BRETT ROWLAND - browland@shawmedia.com
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HUNTLEY – Residents will begin moving Friday into Deer Path of Huntley, an affordable assisted living community for physically disabled adults – one of seven such facilities in the state and the only one in the northwest suburbs.

The more-than-\$27 million three-story facility has 128 studio and one-bedroom apartments. Inside the 118,000-square-foot building are features designed specifically for disabled adults ages 22 to 64. It has a pub and billiards room, beauty salon and barber shop, computer lab, physical therapy room, basketball court and a service dog training and washing area.

Each apartment has a kitchenette, bathroom and shower with grab bars and an emergency alert system. Certified nursing assistants, working under the direction of a licensed nurse, will be on-duty at all times.

Demand for this type of housing has been needed, local officials said at an opening event Thursday at Deer Path of Huntley, 12500 Regency Parkway. Nearly 60 percent of the apartments were reserved before it opened, said Rod Burkett, president and CEO of BMA Management Ltd., the company that will manage the facility.



The entrance to Deer Path of Huntley, an affordable assisted living community for disabled adults. Residents will begin moving into the 118,000-square-foot facility today. (Sarah Nader – snader@shawmedia.com)

BMA Management, a Bradley-based firm, manages 36 senior living communities, including Heritage Woods of Huntley, which is adjacent to Deer Path.

The facility was built with a combination of public and private money. The Illinois Housing Development Authority provided federal low-income housing tax credits that generated \$5.4 million in private equity and the project was financed with \$19.7 million in tax-exempt bonds. Developer financing provided an additional \$1.78 million. The state Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's energy grant fund pitched in \$233,600, according to BMA

Management and the Illinois Housing Development Authority.

This property is probably the poster child for private entrepreneurship, federal, state and local government all working together to bring something to fruition that is going to impact the lives of so many people," Burkett said Thursday. "This collaboration all starts with a private entrepreneur, someone that's willing to take the risk, someone that's got the inertia, the momentum to get things moving."

In the case of Deer Path, the entrepreneurship came from developer Bravo Properties

LLC, of Oak Brook, Burkett said.

Zach Leonard of Bravo Properties said the project would not have been possible without tax credits.

Few facilities serve disabled adults, said Wayne Smallwood, executive director of the Affordable Assisted Living Coalition, a nonprofit trade association for companies that develop and operate affordable assisted living projects in the state's Supportive Living Program. "There are 142 assisted living facilities [in the state], but this is

the Supportive Living Program. "We can cater to all income levels," he said. "People with physical disabilities have often not been able to work or earn enough ... so a model like this is very useful. And it's excellent use of state tax dollars. Keep in mind that the rate that's paid to this building represents 54 percent of what would be paid to a nursing home. It's a great thing. It changes lives."

Physically disabled adults, including those on Medicaid or who get monthly Social Security benefits, can qualify for residency because Deer Path operates

That's \$30,960 in Kane County for a one-person household, according to a news release from the Illinois Housing Development Authority.

The state's Supportive Living Program was developed as an alternative to nursing home care for low-income seniors and those with disabilities. Program facilities combine "apartment-style housing with personal care and other services" so "residents can live independently and take part in decision-making," according to the program's website.

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services obtained a waiver to allow payment for services not routinely covered by Medicaid, such as personal care, homemaking, laundry, medication supervision, social activities, recreation and 24-hour staff. Residents are responsible for paying the cost of room and board at the facility, according to the website.

Officials also touted the development's economic impact. When fully leased, Deer Path is expected to employ the equivalent of 55 to 60 full-time employees with an estimated annual payroll of \$1.5 million, Burkett said.

Huntley Village President Charles Sass welcomed the development. He called it a "beautiful facility."

David McGrath, 52, said he is excited to move into his apartment at Deer Path. He called the facility "amazing."

McGrath was diagnosed with



Deer Path of Huntley, an affordable assisted living community for disabled adults 22 to 64, held a grand opening Wednesday. The three-story facility, developed with public and private funds, has 128 apartments. (Sarah Nader – snader@shawmedia.com)

one of only seven that offer services to people aged 22 to 64 with physical disabilities,"

Smallwood said. "It's very special that we do that because we need all the options we can get for housing with services."

Many people with physical disabilities have few other options for housing, said Smallwood, who as a state employee helped craft

under the state's Supportive Living Program. Rental costs vary based on the size of the apartment and the financial package that is put together for each resident, said Julie Simpkins, vice president of marketing and sales for BMA Management.

The apartments are available to those earning 60 percent of the area median income or less.

Parkinson's disease, a progressive nervous system disorder that affects movement, about eight years ago. For the past two months, he has been living with his mother, Rosemary McGrath, in Sun City Huntley.

Rosemary McGrath, 74, said taking care of her son was becoming too much to handle on her own.

"It was getting to the point where it was more than my body would allow," she said.

Not wanting to move her son to a nursing home with much older people, Rosemary McGrath found Deer Path a much better option. Cost was another factor. David McGrath has no savings and relies on disability benefits, his mother said.

"This is an amazing opportunity for people in this age group to live in a place with so many amenities," Rosemary McGrath said. "The staff could not be more caring and supportive. I'm so fortunate that my loved one will have all that is offered here."

While David McGrath knew he didn't want to live in a nursing home, he initially was wary about living at Deer Path. He didn't know what to expect, his mother said. "A lot of people are very hesitant, like David was," she said. "But once you see this place ... It's just more than we could ever ask for."

Deer Path of Huntley

What: A 128-apartment affordable assisted living facility for physically disabled adults ages 22 to 64 operated by BMA Management
Where: 12500 Regency Parkway, Huntley

Phone: 847-515-1800

Website: www.bma-mgmt.com/deerpathhuntley/



Annie Gallagher (left) gives a tour of an apartment at Deer Path of Huntley to Crystal Lake residents Debbie Petersen and Terry Trobiani during a grand opening celebration Wednesday. Deer Path of Huntley is an affordable assisted living community for adults 22 to 64 with physical disabilities. (Sarah Nader – snader@shawmedia.com)



A view of the pub and billiards room at Deer Path of Huntley. Deer Path of Huntley also has a basketball court, computer lab, physical therapy room and a service dog training and washing area. (Sarah Nader – snader@shawmedia.com)