

Nursing Homes - They are a Changin'

Looking forward to perhaps living in a nursing home someday? Or are you like most and definitely don't think about that? Why don't people want to live in a nursing home? Well certainly it's not like home, your home. If you have had even just one experience in a typical, traditional nursing home you probably observed some of the following. Long hallways- nope don't have any in my house. Beeping call lights, beeping alarms, overhead paging, all sorts of smells that are not of home. There is one large main dining room where everyone eats every meal everyday all together like a mess hall. Institutionally overcooked foods often canned usually not fresh. A half a room shared with a stranger. Being woken up on someone else's time table, not your own. Meal times set at some arbitrary times when you may or may not be hungry. How about deep loneliness while you are probably the most debilitated in your life and dependent on others? Those are definitely reasons to not want to live in a nursing home.

Well, there is good news! Nursing homes are changing, thanks to who we call "pioneers" across the country. The Pioneer Network formed to represent them and promote what we call "culture change" to change the institutional culture of nursing homes throughout America. We are changing that institutional culture mentioned above to instead be all about you. Your life should not change as you know it no matter where you live even if you live in a nursing home. Some pioneers around the country are building small nursing home houses where you can actually get skilled nursing care. Some are remodeling old style nursing homes into households with private rooms, kitchens you can access anytime you want, and "refrigerator rights" like you have in your home where you can just go open it and gaze upon your eating possibilities. We no longer wake residents up. Most residents are old, for heaven's sake, certainly retired and deserving of rest and sleep as long as their bodies desire. Benefits of being well rested are many, as we each well know. People have better mood, lightened depression and anxiety, are more alert and able to enjoy their day, eat and function better. "Sleep is like medicine," my Mother always says.

We are offering what we call "open dining" where you come eat early if you're an early bird or late if you like to sleep in. And we are changing nursing home kitchens into restaurants with food to order, buffets, salad bars, and family style dining where you help yourself just like at home. Is your interest peaked? To learn more, go to pioneernetwork.net or coculturechange.org and watch for subsequent articles. If you find yourself involved with someone needing nursing home care, start to ask if these "true home" and "culture change"



features are available or not and let your money and your choice start to say what you would rather have.

"Put the person before the task." - Pioneer Network core value

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