

## Growing older with life care

At Central Texas communities, residents can stay in place from independent living through assisted living and memory care

BY JUDY WILEY

**B**aby boomers have had it their way since the '60s and Austin is Austin, so it's not surprising to find that bars, bistros and ball games have become the next big thing in retirement communities here. Some communities also have the serious side covered, with full-spectrum care or life care four levels that range from independent living to special memory care for people with dementia or Alzheimer's disease. The concept of a continuum of care at one community is not new, but newer communities such as 3-year-old Querencia at Barton Creek and expansions at standbys such as Westminster Manor and Buckner Villas are widening the options in Austin.

Perhaps the liveliest-sounding option is Longhorn Village, where sponsorship by the Texas Exes means life-care retirement comes with perks such as on-site University of Texas continuing education classes and membership in University Federal Credit Union, also on-site.

The 60-acre campus at Steiner Ranch has a full liquor license to serve residents in 41 villas, 173 independent-living apartments, 20 private assisted-living apartments, 60 private nursing units, and 16 private memory-care rooms.

The residents have access to a movie theater, the Blue Agave Day Spa with salon services; health care supplemented by partnership agreements with the UT social work department and nursing school; regular performances by musicians at the UT Butler School of Music; the UT golf club; sporting events; and more.

"Everybody becomes an official Texas Ex," says Jennifer Slayton, director of sales. "We've got Aggies, we've got 'Bama Boys. They giggle as they go down the hall, I've got Aggie guys walking down the hall with their 'I'm a Texas Ex' key fob."

Residents also have five different dining options, including fine dining, a bistro and a coffee bar.

The company that manages Longhorn Village, Cooperative Retirement Services of America, also oversees university-affiliated communities at Pennsylvania State University, University of Alabama and Duke University.

Life care at Longhorn Village, along with estate care, means residents pay a substantial entrance fee starting at \$300,000 that guarantees care for life with 95 percent refunded to the resident or heirs regardless of the time stayed. It covers care needed in any of the sections as time goes on. An additional monthly fee starting at \$2,500 covers maintenance, some linen service, some meals and other items.

Contracts for this kind of comprehensive care are necessarily complex, and seniors organizations recommend that anyone planning to sign a contract have an attorney



Everyone at Longhorn Village is an official Texas Ex, regardless of alma mater. Life-care services are just the beginning. Perks include on-site continuing education classes.

ney take a look first. Fees can vary widely depending on the type of residence chosen.

Different communities have different methods of dividing payment for life care and estate care. Life care might be handled with an up-front entrance fee, or the monthly fee might apply, or a resident might use their own long-term care insurance. Estate care is generally an agreement whereby the resident puts down a large entrance fee, comparable to the amount that would be needed to purchase a home, and the community guarantees a percentage will be returned to the heirs. Life and estate care might both be part of the entrance fee, depending on the contract.

The life-care approach also is available at Querencia, a Hill Country-style community that strives for a resort vibe.

The 90 percent-refundable entrance fees start at \$299,900 with monthly fees beginning at \$2,631.

Couples can make good use of life care, says Leslie Dominguez at Querencia at Barton Creek. "They don't have to worry about being separated from spouses because of health issues," she says.

Movement between levels is flexible, she says. Residents who might need just a few days or weeks of nursing care or rehab can return to independent living when they're ready.

Here, the amenities include the Cool Springs Spa and an infinity pool, plus two restaurants with outdoor terraces and fireplaces on 38 acres on rolling hills.

Querencia also has a concierge, valet service personal trainers and other resort-style services. "They even iron the sheets, so you really feel a bit spoiled," Dominguez

says. Nineteen different floor plans for apartments and villas are offered. Querencia has 167 independent-living units, 42 nursing beds, 40 assisted-living apartments and 23 memory-care suites.

Two of Austin's oldest retirement communities are responding to the emerging need for more and better senior care with renovations from the ground up.

At Buckner Villas in Northeast Austin, a new campus completed in April includes memory care, says Robb Pettitt, marketing director.

A multisensory space called a snoezelen room helps to calm people with Alzheimer's. Originally developed to help autistic children, the room includes lights, music, things to touch and other elements that calm patients. Staff members who have tried it, don't want to leave, Pettitt says.

The new memory-care wing, the Harbor, also includes a monitoring system that keeps tabs on when residents in the unit get up, leave the room, etc.

Pettitt says Buckner is proud of its experienced staff, many of whom have been there for more than 10 years.

Buckner Villas is a nondenominational Christian community that has 20 assisted-living apartments, plus more apartments and villas for independent-living, skilled nursing-care and memory-care units. No entrance fee is collected, and the monthly rate starts at \$1,795.

One of Austin's oldest retirement communities, Westminster Manor in Central Austin, also is making big changes, with a \$100 million renovation currently under way.

"We have always been a life-care community, but we understood that

with the growing need, with our health center somewhat based on a medical model today, we needed to make it more residential," says Brian Robbins, executive director.

To that end, Westminster, which has been in Austin since 1967, is adding a five-story residential building, including 75 independent-living apartments, 55 skilled-nursing rooms, 30 memory-care suites, and 22 assisted-living apartments.

Robbins notes that the population 65 and older is expected to double by 2040, so Westminster wanted to be prepared. He sees Westminster as a Texas tradition, noting that everyone from university presidents to artists have lived there.

At the current community apartments, entry fees start at \$73,819 with monthly fees of \$1,973. In the expansion, entry fees will be \$192,053 with monthly fees of \$3,000.

Another community that provides full-spectrum care is Horizon Bay in Round Rock, where the emphasis is on a theme of "your story continues with us," says sales director Nicole Gasaway.

Horizon Bay uses programs such as mind aerobicsto keep residents engaged on six levels: spiritual, emotional, physical, vocational, social and intellectual.

The apartment-style community includes independent living, assisted living, nursing care and memory care.

Horizon Bay offers several financial plans. Gasaway declined to provide rate information other than to say that residents pay a "community fee" plus monthly fees.

Communities with full range of care:

### Buckner Villas

11110 Tom Adams Drive, Austin 836-1515  
www.bucknerretirement.org

### Horizon Bay

8005 Cornerwood Drive, Round Rock 512-238-7200  
www.horizonbay.com

### Longhorn Village

12501 Longhorn Parkway, Austin 266-5600  
www.longhornvillage.com

### Querencia at Barton Creek

2500 Barton Creek Blvd., Austin 610-9401  
www.querenciabartoncreek.com

### Westminster Manor

4100 Jackson Ave., Austin 454-2140  
www.westminstermanor.org