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Henderson center that monitors seniors called first of its kind in Nevada



Executive director Mark Shaffer discusses features of the ice cream bar at Poet's Walk Assisted Living on Monday, Jan. 16, 2017, in Henderson. Benjamin Hager/Las Vegas Review-Journal

By MICHAEL LYLE

In middle of the night, a patient at a senior-care facility could be tossing and turning or even getting up five, six or seven times.

Yet, because of a condition that impairs their memory, they might not be able to tell someone and get the care they need.



Poet's Walk Assisted Living has an enclosure of finches for it's residents to enjoy.

That could mark the beginning of other problems, said Alexander Markowits, president of Spring Hills Senior Communities.

Some facilities are looking at technological advances to offer better patient care. Spring Hills Senior Communities, for example, features items such as sensors in the room to better monitor people.



A demo room at Poet's Walk Assisted Living on Monday, Jan. 16, 2017, in Henderson.

"With this technology, we can see a crisis before it fully develops," Markowits said. "More (senior-care facilities) are looking into this, but not as many as there should be."



The lobby at Poet's Walk Assisted Living on Monday, Jan. 16, 2017, in Henderson

Poet's Walk Henderson, Spring Hills Senior Communities' latest-assisted living and memory care-facility, opened Jan. 11 at 1750 W. Horizon Ridge Parkway. This is the first Poet's Walk in Nevada — there are others in Texas — and it's billed as a manifestation of Markowits' vision to enhance care for seniors with dementia and Alzheimer's.

While many places offer general care for seniors, Markowits said, there aren't many options that focus specifically on dementia and Alzheimer's. "For many places, it's just a wing in the building," he added.



The gift shop at Poet's Walk Assisted Living on Monday, Jan. 16, 2017, in Henderson



Executive director Mark Shaffer at Poet's Walk Assisted Living on Monday, Jan. 16, 2017, in Henderson

Another priority at the senior community is to focus on patients' activities before their condition worsened, Markowits said. "Dementia shouldn't stop people from doing some of the activities they did before," he added. "Here, if they were a poet (before the condition), we do poetry with them. If they were an artist, we do art."

Other health care facilities are looking into adding technology that monitors patients around the clock. "This helps us establish a baseline on a patient's health," said Mark Shaffer, executive director of Poet's Walk. "That way, we can tell what their benchmarks are. If they normally have 15 breaths a minute when they sleep and all of a sudden it's 100, we know."

The high population of retirees who move to the area is one reason Nevada was chosen for a Spring Hills Senior Communities location, Markowits said.

Scott Muelrath, president and CEO of the Henderson Chamber of Commerce, said the facility addresses an area of health care that Henderson needed.

"This helps fill a niche that Southern Nevada struggles with," he said. "This will help to bring attention to this sector of health care."

Now that Henderson's location is up and running, Markowits is looking at a second Nevada location.

"We are looking at Summerlin and hope to have a facility there by next year," he said. Visit spring-hills.com.