



Architecturally designed for people suffering from Alzheimer's and other dementias, the John McClure Snook Regional Center opened an Adult Day Program. Pictured are Danielle Gardner and her father Clifford Wilson, a participant in the program.

Taking Care of Dad with Mercy

"This is probably the most unique place I've ever been. And I've done a lot of research on places specializing in Alzheimer's and dementia," clarified Danielle Gardner.

Gardner is referring to the John McClure Snook Regional Center, a Mercy Medical memory-care community in Daphne, Alabama. Having experienced a mother who died from Alzheimer's and a father who was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia, Gardner is very knowledgeable and experienced with finding professional medical care.

Mercy Rehabilitation and Home Health

Gardner first came to know Mercy after her father had knee surgery and needed rehabilitation. Thomas Hospital referred him to the Mercy Rehabilitation Hospital, the only licensed acute rehab hospital in Baldwin County. *"What a great facility. The service was excellent and very patient oriented. My dad did therapy twice a day for fourteen days. He came home and Mercy came out for Home Health services. We had every therapist that ever was – physical, occupational therapists, rehabilitation nurses and registered nurses. The difference between Mercy Medical and other places Dad had been, was he loved the Mercy staff. They were fabulous. He was very comfortable with them and didn't complain or whine; he was a good sick person. We knew we had made the right choice,"* explained Gardner.

Along with some physical consequences of old age, Gardner's dad also needed specialized care for his Lewy body dementia. *"We noticed about a year ago, things were changing with Dad mentally. He would carry*

on conversations with people not there. And if I argued with him explaining no one was in the room, it became futile. It ended up that Dad went into the hospital. After seeing a neurologist, Dad started on medication immediately," Gardner said.

Lewy body dementia is the second most frequent cause of hospitalization for dementia, and is characterized by the loss of ability to think, reason and remember. In Lewy body dementia, abnormal structures, called Lewy bodies, develop throughout the brain. Lewy body dementia shares characteristics with both Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. Like Alzheimer's, it causes confusion and like Parkinson's, it causes rigid muscles, slowed movement and tremors. Lewy body dementia can also cause hallucinations. There's no cure for Lewy body dementia but treatment focuses on managing the signs and symptoms.

Adult Day Program

For years, Gardner had been looking for a safe place for her father to go while she worked. After the John McClure Snook Regional Center finished its fourth pod, it opened an adult day care program in July, the only adult day care program available in Baldwin County. The program at Snook was a perfect match for Gardner's needs.

"The Snook Center far outweighs anything as far as modern technology. It is a safe house but patients can maneuver easily. It is designed for them to feel at home. The colors are bright and cheerful and among its other novelties, it has a soda fountain shop. Dad loves ice cream and Dad loves this place," described Gardner.

Architecturally designed for people suffering from Alzheimer's and other dementias, the John McClure Snook Regional Center opened in early 2004 with three pods that are home for its 47 residents. A pod consists of 16 bedroom and bath combinations with a central living, dining and kitchen area. Its promenade features a main-street American shopscape with an ambience of yesteryear and mementos from the past. Around another corner, a nostalgic haven features Coke-a-Cola decor and a jukebox playing everything from Sinatra to Fitzgerald.

What sets the Snook Center apart from other places is not just the state-of-the-art design, or the memory care enhancements; it is the professional caregivers who make everyone's stay memorable. *"I can't speak highly enough about the caregivers here. When I brought Dad the first time, I found out that my good friend is the activities director. We've known each other for years. They are all attentive not just to me but to Dad. The first time Dad came here was for a 3-day Respite, which was fabulous. When he came home he told me "they all know my name." That made an impression on him. He wanted to move in,"* pointed out Gardner.

Respite, relief for the caregiver

Respite stays help relieve the family or primary caregiver. Caregivers often schedule respite to travel, rest or take care of their own healthcare needs. Short-term respite stays are available for skilled nursing, assisted living, memory care and hospice at Mercy Medical. For Danielle Gardner and her husband, respite provided them weekend leisure time while their father was well taken care of.

"This is the primetime of our lives. My kids are gone. My husband and I are very active. We bowl on a league and do a lot of tournaments. My life came to a halt for a while. We worried about Dad getting into things, even medications. One time we came home and the water was running in the bathroom sink. The Snook Center changed all that," said Gardner.

Project Lifesaver

Gardner's father is also a Project Lifesaver participant. Project Lifesaver is the nation's most effective program for locating and rescuing individuals that wander. Participants wear wristband transmitters that emit signals picked up by special receivers. Mercy Medical and law enforcement agencies formed an alliance to create Project Lifesaver of Baldwin County in 2004.

"My mother wandered. I don't worry about Dad wandering because a year ago, I signed him up with Project Lifesaver. I check the battery in his transmitter everyday to be sure it is operating. The police department comes to my house once a month and changes the battery out," explained Gardner.

Today, Danielle Gardner and her family rely heavily on Mercy Medical's programs to help them care for Dad. Whether it's Mercy Rehabilitation, Project Lifesaver, Respite, Adult Day Program, or Home Health, the care is exceptional.

"Had a family member stepped up to the plate and said, "We'll take Dad this weekend and you go on and don't worry about a thing," life may have been different. But that never happened. Instead the Snook Center and Mercy Medical became my next of kin. They are my family because they came to the rescue," said Gardner.

Reservations are now being accepted for Adult Day Program and for residents. For more information about the Snook Center call 251.625.2555, or toll free, 888.889.7386 or go online at www.mercymedical.com/Snook.

Adult Day Program benefits -

- Provides safety and structure for Alzheimer's or dementia participants
- Located at John McClure Snook Center, a memory care community specifically designed for the memory impaired
- Specially trained staff and a registered nurse on staff
- Hours are Monday - Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Monthly support group offered the third Tuesday 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Daily features -

- Three nutritious meals and two snacks
- Stimulating morning and afternoon memory-focused activities
- Supervised personal care
- Use of a private room and bathroom
- Social interaction with participants and residents
- Outdoor courtyards and space to wander safely

Requirements for participation -

- A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or other dementia
- An ambulatory status or those who can propel themselves in a wheelchair and transfer independently
- Minimum 3 days a week

Admission process -

- Call 625-2555 to schedule an appointment
- Participant is evaluated by center's nurse for eligibility
- Caregiver receives paperwork for enrollment
- Participant visits doctor, 30 days within start date of program
- A TB skin test or chest x-ray, 30 days within start date of program
- Paperwork is completed and returned prior to start date
- Registration fee is paid



Call 625.2555

Before they wander...

locates wandering individuals with dementia, Alzheimer's, autism or other disorders.

A non-profit community service available to residents of Baldwin and Mobile counties.

mercymedical.com/projectlifesaver