

KENDALL GAZETTE

Ask Helen



Residents at Independent Living Communities Live the “Suite” Life

BY HELEN SHAHAM

Q. I'm an 85 year old widow considering a move to an independent living community. I'm still very active but have limited opportunities for socializing since most of my friends no longer drive. What's a typical day like at a senior living community?

A. You are to be commended for beginning your research while you're still able to enjoy the many benefits an independent living community has to offer. To get a feel for the lifestyle afforded residents at a senior living community, try imagining being immersed in a world filled with sophisticated cultural, educational and social programs. Now imagine that world existing just a few steps from your front door.

For residents of innovative retirement communities, this world is a reality. Each day offers endless opportunities for stimulating activities and outings as well as the option of being as relaxed as one pleases. Long-time Suites' resident Lee Hersh describes the lifestyle at The Palace the best, “It's like a cruise ship...that never leaves the port.”

At The Palace Suites, a luxury independent living community for active seniors in the Kendall area of Miami, residents live the Suite Life, choosing their own desired amount of privacy and social interaction.

Our full-time Entertainment Director provides a variety of programming ranging from fitness classes and special outings to volunteer opportunities to help residents remain independent while continuing to be active members of the community at large.

On a typical day, early-risers may begin with a trip to the beautifully appointed dining room for a complimentary rich continental breakfast with their friends.

Following breakfast, residents can choose to participate in a variety of fitness classes such as tai chi, a resident favorite; Zumba, which fuses hypnotic Latin rhythms with easy to follow moves; water aerobics in our heated, outdoor pool; yoga; stretch & flex; or meditation.

Additionally, our professionally staffed Wellness Center is open five days a week from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., allowing plenty of time for individual workout sessions.

The Palace bustles with activity throughout the day. Residents head off to enjoy activities geared to their interests. Some may go on excursions to the Hard Rock Casino (a favorite for many), as well as the local malls while others may stay at the community, finding their way to the community's library to enjoy a best-selling novel.

For our budding Picasso's, the water color class offers a great way

to continue a lifetime hobby or discover a hidden talent. In fact, resident artist Helio De La Torre surprised his daughter Heliana Brown, when he unveiled his five creations during the community's recent art show...

“I am very impressed,” she said. “It was a talent that we always thought he had but it was never developed. This past year especially, he has undertaken a tremendous amount of work.”

Living in a Senior Living Community doesn't mean our residents retire from South Florida's cultural happenings and events. Now, without worrying about driving and parking, they are able to appreciate events much more. Recent highlights included outings to West Side Story at the Rocky Theatre, Alvin Ailey's American Dance Theatre at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts and Hello Dolly at the University of Miami's Jerry Herman Ring Theater.

For lunch, residents can fix a sandwich in their apartment or enjoy the excellent bistro-style fare in our Café-Bar. We also have regular group outings to dine at one of the area's newest restaurants or local favorites.

Afternoons and evening are no exception to the continuation of activity choices. Residents can be found playing a friendly game of blackjack or bridge or joining an “Issue and Insights” discussion group. Our floral arranging and jewelry making classes are popular as well.

There are also specialized groups for residents to get together with

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others with similar interests and backgrounds. The Men's Group for example, may meet for an outing to pool hall or special sporting event while our Hispanic residents meet monthly for Circulo Hispanico. We even have a Red Hat Society which meets monthly as well.

The Happy Hour kicks off every day at 4:30 p.m. and always features live entertainment. Here, at the Plaza, friends mingle for cocktails and before-dinner drinks. A typical nightly gourmet dinner may include a European cucumber salad or Caesar salad with sourdough croutons followed by a choice of four entrees ranging from filet mignon with béarnaise sauce to grilled chicken kabob in a pineapple glaze. If you are calorie-conscious, you'll enjoy our delicious heart-healthy, low-fat items every night.

As the sun sets, residents stroll over to the theater to hear a lecture, play bingo, watch live entertainment or view the latest blockbuster or a classic film. Or, perhaps they relax in their apartment, which not unlike any rental community, is decorated to their own personal tastes.

There are also opportunities for spiritual enrichment at The Palace Suites. Transportation is provided to several local churches and ecumenical services are held weekly on site. Religious holidays and special traditions are observed too.

In addition to everything mentioned, most communities have large events & parties celebrating various holidays and occasions throughout the year. Some of the more popular ones which residents enjoy at The Palace Suites are Valentine's Day, Mardi Gras, Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day, Father's Day, the 4th of July, Halloween and, of course, Christmas & New-Year.

If you're still unsure about what to expect in an independent living community, try asking if you can stay there for a weekend or a few days "to experience life in the community". If there is an available apartment, they will most likely let you do it. The Palace Suites has a popular "Discovery Program" to allow people to experience the community first hand. This is an invaluable first hand experience!

If you have questions about the lifestyle changes that go with aging, or if you'd like to be invited to a social event at The Palace Suites, please send a note to Helen Shaham, The Palace Suites, 11377 S.W. 84th St., Miami, Florida 33173, call her at 305-270-7018, or email helen@thepalace.org.

Helen Shaham and her husband Jacob have been operating retirement communities for nearly 30 years. The Palace Suites in Kendall is a luxury Independent Living Community for active seniors. In addition, The Palace at Kendall campus is home to two Assisted Living Residences and a Nursing & Rehab Center. They also operate The Palace Gardens Assisted Living Community in Homestead, Homestead Manor Nursing Home and The Palace @ Home, a Medicare Certified Home Health Agency. Their two newest projects are The Palace at Weston – luxury living for those 55 and over, and The Palace Tel-Aviv, a continuing care retirement community in Israel. They have two communities under development – The Palace at Weston Senior Living and The Palace at Coral Gables. More information can be found on the company website, www.ThePalace.org or by calling 305-271-2220.