

State-of-the-art Berkshire Place ready for skilled-nursing patients

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Photo Gallery | [Berkshire Place in Pittsfield](#)

PITTSFIELD && Carmella Scelsi hopes to find the new Berkshire Place as welcoming as the century-old one she's called home the past four years.

On Wednesday, Scelsi will be among the dozens of current long-term residents moving from the original skilled nursing facility at 89 South St. to the more spacious, state-of-the art, \$10 million complex a half mile away at 260 South St.

"I hope it's as comfortable and warm as [the original] Berkshire Place has been," she said.

Scelsi joined other Berkshire Place residents, staff, along with city and projects officials for a tour of the three-story, 44,000-square-foot residence. The showcase Monday afternoon followed a ribbon-cutting ceremony to formally mark completion of the yearlong project, completed on schedule and within budget, according to Executive Director Edward Forfa.

Forfa said the 54-bed facility — 10 more than the current one — will gradually employ 20 more staff members, bringing the total to 120 providing around-the-clock care.

The larger building will allow Berkshire Place to expand the services that it already offers for short- and long-term care and provide them in a more modern, accessible setting.

"We've reduced the number of steps for residents and staff with this layout ... while we continue our tradition of caring since 1888," Forfa said.

That year, the first Berkshire Place opened as a retirement home for women; known as the Berkshire County Home for Aged Women until 1960. It didn't accept male residents until 2006.

Both the former St. Teresa's Church and a one-time office building were razed on the 3.51-acre site to make way for the new Berkshire Place. St. Teresa's was one of several Berkshire County churches the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield closed in 2008.

Mayor Daniel L. Bianchi lauded the site's conversion from a religious use to a health care facility.

"The place gives a warm, welcoming feeling," he said.

The project's general contractor, Allegrone Construction Co. of Pittsfield, employed a number of local subcontractors, putting 100 skilled laborers to work. Project superintendent Rob Rosier, who led the tour, said the goal was to ensure Berkshire Place belonged in its new neighborhood.

"The building was designed to fit well with the contour of the land," he said.

The Berkshire Place board of directors hasn't decided the future use of originally brick building near the Berkshire Museum.

However, the organization is interested in using that structure to reconnect with its roots as a place that provides independent living for seniors, Forfa has said.

Meanwhile residents and board members marvel at the 21st century Berkshire Place.

"I have a beautiful room and wonderful people [who care for me]," said resident Carol Harris.

Board President Shaun Heimann added, "There's no other facility like this in Berkshire County."

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Carmella Scelsi looks at her new room at Berkshire Place in Pittsfield on Monday with activities director Debbie Dudak.