

The Living Design Aviary

How Birds Can Benefit your
Residents, Staff & Community



Therapy That Doesn't
Feel Like Therapy

These comments were extracted from newspaper articles dealing with the impact of pet therapy. These health care facilities use Living Design aviaries to bring pet therapy to their residents. Copies of all news articles quoted are available.

Drawing Residents Out

Sister Ann Francis recalls a resident who had gone several months without communicating. **“After seeing the birds for the first time, he reached out and touched me and said, ‘I’m not mad.’ I said, ‘I know you’re not mad.’ For a moment like that, it’s all worth it.”** Executive Director, Taylorville, IL

“People who really stayed to themselves are coming out of their rooms to watch the birds” Assistant Administrator, Sheboygan, WI

“I knew the residents would enjoy it. Some people who never got out of their rooms get out a lot now.” Activity Director, Independence, KS

“Residents who haven’t talked much in the past will count birds or name their colors as they watch the flying finches.” Administrator, Lemont, IL

“There are residents who have never left their rooms who now come to [the aviary] morning and evening. It’s important for them to see life.” Marketing/Public Relations Coordinator, Stevens Point, WI

“We learned that she raised Canaries at home. She’s down in the lobby five or six times a day now, and she rarely went down before. It gives her an opportunity to share her knowledge and talk with other residents.” Volunteer Coordinator, Stevens Point, WI

“Residents who used to prefer sitting in their rooms now come to the living room and watch the activity of the birds.” Eureka, IL

“Every day you see more and more residents coming out here to watch the birds and talk about them. It’s getting them up and out of their rooms and that’s what they need, not only to keep going, but to keep alert.” Activities Director, Farmington, IL

“The Aviary gave us a reason to stay at the home and visit... and watching the birds makes the visit pleasant for children.” Waverly, IA

“Mom is anxious to come to the home to sit with Dad and check on the birds.” Eureka, IL

“Now when I leave him I don’t feel so guilty because he has something special to watch.” Eureka, IL

Community Involvement

The birds draw people who wouldn't otherwise come to the hospital such as school groups, community members, and people in physical therapy. For example, one small child on crutches stops regularly to visit the birds after therapy. **"She walks off the elevator wide-eyed and gazes up in awe."** Executive Director, Taylorville, IL

"I don't know whether it's just coincidence, but (last Wednesday) there were more visitors in the building than ever before." Volunteer Coordinator, Jefferson, WI

The Children are thrilled to see the birds, and it's a common interest. It was an extra treat for the children to see the birds on Halloween. It was a pleasure to see them respond." Resident, Morris, IL

Resident Comments

"Everyone loves the aviary... It's so cheerful and we get so much enjoyment from it." Springfield, IL

"[The Aviary] is a fascination for everybody who lives here because you can spend time here. It's a great way to pass the time." Resident, Red Wind, MN.

"This is just great... I look at the birds every day; it's very relaxing." Resident, Morris, IL

"They are very nice to watch, very pretty and very active... I usually stand by the door and watch them, it passes the time." Matthews, MO

"They put fish in, but they just swim. These birds are busy all the time... if we were as busy as those birds we'd be worn out." Resident, Red Wing, MN

Resident Remembrances

"I just love it. When I was a little girl, we had a bird; my mother named it 'Bing Crosby', he was such a good singer." Resident, Winona, MN

"Birds seem to have been popular pets among the older generations of people here. Many of the folks will sit near the aviary, saying it reminds them of birds they once had." Director of Volunteer Services, Jefferson, WI

"I like the chirping. It reminds me of a morning on the farm," Resident, Matthews, MO

The Canary flitting among the branches is like the one Isabelle Billings remembers... **"Of course that was years ago when I was at home."** Resident, Sheboygan, WI

A Link with Mother Nature

“It has the appearance of being in the free outside air. I want to find out what sets of birds are there and who goes into which nest.” Resident, Jefferson, WI

“Most residents lived in the country and heard the birds singing every morning. For them, this is very soothing and relaxing.” Volunteer Coordinator, Stevens Point, WI

“I like them. It’s like being outdoors.” Resident, Dunlap, IA

“Residents could never be taken out in the woods... with [the aviary] in a really nice location; they can stroll by after dinner and see what the birds are up to.” Activity Therapy Director, Jefferson, WI

Therapeutic Value

“It’s therapeutic for residents, visitors love it. It’s wonderful to see a year and a half’s planning come together like this.” Volunteer Coordinator, Crookston, MN

“You can look different than normal people and there’s no stigma with an animal; there’s acceptance, even if it’s not by a human being. It’s acceptance saying, ‘I’m OK’” Administrator, Crystal Lake, IL

“I get feelings out of the residents that they haven’t been able to express.” Administrator, Crystal Lake, IL

While birds cannot offer tactile stimulation, they offer something for most everyone. **“Those who can’t see well can’t hear them, and those who can’t hear, can see.”** Activity Assistant, Springfield, IL

This all serves as a sort of calming therapy for the elderly. **“You have to know yourself that if you go out on a bright sunny day, you feel like a million bucks... you pay a doctor to make you feel that good.”** Pet Therapy Program, Jefferson, WI

“Patients who cannot do a lot still can enjoy this without any exertion.” Resident, Mary Stephens, in her early 80’s has been unable to speak since a stroke. As she studied the active birds, she was asked if she enjoyed the aviary. With tears in her eyes and a smile on her face, she nodded yes. Taylorville, IL.

Staff Involvement

The staff sometimes uses the aviary as an ice-breaker with new residents. Like music, the birds can have a calming effect and lift spirits. **“Many don’t have much to smile about, so it’s a big event for the staff to see the express joy.”** Assistant Administrator, Springfield, IL

“Watching them is mesmerizing. The staff is just as fascinated as the rest. I can’t think of a soul who wouldn’t get something out of it. It’s relaxing to watch them and educational.” Activity Director, Matthews, MO

“We announce it on the intercom when the baby birds are born. They’re fun to watch.” Louisberg, KS

“It’s just so fascinating to see what soothing effect it has on our residents, or anybody that comes to see it.” Director of Nurses, Austin, MN

“We give physical care, but they need more; with the aviary, a special sharing goes on.” Staff member, Eureka, IL

“I think the real reason is it brings a little of the outdoors in and a lot of joy into their lives.” Activity Director, Farmington, IL

“As an activity director, it’s very rewarding to see the reactions and the expressions from the residents, especially those unable to otherwise take part in day to day activities.” Activity Director, Austin, MN

Veterinarian Comments

“They must have chosen their birds very carefully. Bird disease that can be transmitted to humans, such as psittacosis (Parrot Fever), apply largely to parrot-type birds... From a veterinary standpoint, these are good programs, especially for the elderly and long-term situations where they will not get exposed to animals. That’s where pet therapy programs really make a difference.” – Paul McGowan, Veterinarian, Coble Animal Hospital

Animal Assisted Therapy...
A Great Idea and We Make it Fly!

