

# Community spirit shows up just about everywhere at Atwood Acres

By Matt Lynch  
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TOWNSEND — Tucked away down Dudley Road, Atwood Acres has been a source of affordable housing for independent seniors over 62 and those with mobility impairment for 18 years.

Property manager Mari-Beth Conrad has been there for eight years and believes that what sets the apartment building aside from other retirement communities and centers is its "community spirit."

To Conrad, the closeness of the 51 current residents defines what Atwood Acres is all about.

"It's really a nice community," Conrad said. "People really care about each other. It's a very tight-knit group."

Built in 1989, the apartment building is managed by RCAP Solutions Inc., of Gardner. Its apartments consist of five rooms, for

those who are mobility-impaired, and a dozen studio apartments. The rest of the dwellings are one-bedroom settings, which is the most popular of the available options, according to Conrad.

The waiting list to get into Atwood Acres isn't very long, roughly 30 names, but personal circumstances often dictate who is actually next in line. Conrad lamented that there was one person who has been waiting since 2003 because none of the mobility-impaired rooms have opened up since she put her name on the list.

"If you were to come and say you wanted a studio, I could get you in right now," she said. "But if you wanted a one-bedroom, it could take a year and a half to get to the top of the list. No one leaves Atwood Acres because they want to; they leave because they have to."

Salvation is on the horizon, however, as RCAP Solutions recently announced receipt of a HUD grant that would allow the construction of a 36-unit, fully-accessible companion building behind the existing Atwood Acres structure. There will be no studio apartments among the rooms, Conrad said, but the new rooms will be available only to seniors.

Once the building is completed, current residents will get to welcome the new members of their community and expose them to all the perks Atwood Acres has to offer.

Residents are treated to blood-pressure screenings once a month, as well as a visit from the Townsend Public Library and a chance to borrow some reading materials. Conrad said the staff tried to have a big community dinner once a month with all the trimmings. Former Chief of Police Bill May appears with several fellow musicians to put on a show for the residents as the entertainment portion of a monthly pizza party.

There are more frequent events too, including a social every Friday night, a coffee hour every Thursday morning, and the chance for residents to work in one of the multiple gardens outside, whenever they so choose.

But the real proof of the community spirit that Conrad speaks about is the way the residents give back to the town around them.

The Atwood Cuties, a group of many female residents, put together a calendar for the 275th Anniversary that raised more than \$20,000. The vast majority of that surplus was gifted to the town, with a little more on the way, to help cover the costs of the many 275th Anniversary events. The Cuties also donated the fireworks display for the anniversary parade.

The exterior of the building was recently remodeled and Conrad is hopeful that the inside of the building will get the same treatment soon as well.

"There's definitely always something going on," she laughed.