

BUSINESS MATTERS

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WEDNESDAY
APRIL 13, 2016

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SUN NEWSPAPERS

Biz offers a small, assisted living center

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As the explosion of assisted living centers gains momentum throughout the country and such facilities get larger, a Venice couple have developed an entirely different format.

Magnolia Gardens at 350 Magnolia Road in South Venice is significantly different, featuring a small, six-bedroom family atmosphere home that was seven years in the making.

Frank Russo believes God gave him a vision to create a miniature resort where residents continue their lives enjoying homestyle comforts. An experienced cook and tableside chef, he incorporates fresh ingredients, some from his garden

With private rooms for each resident, the home is managed by certified staff. The outdoor living and activity pavilion for arts and crafts has a working wood fireplace, seating for 25 and a large television.

Russo's partner, Lorri Stedman, plays a major part in the success of his projects. Later this month, they are getting married. He proudly described her role in his vision and how she is a key asset, not only to his life but also to the future of Magnolia.

She has 24 years of nursing experience — the important role of caring for the residents. With third party resources, residents never have to leave the comfort of their home as a geriatric MD, podiatrists and Registered Nurse Practitioners visit.

Magnolia Gardens provides all the comforts of home, and they enjoy the tranquility of gardens with a pathway to the waterfalls and koi fish ponds Russo has designed and built.

Residents can relax in the shade of trees, and he has raised garden boxes enabling the residents to do gardening.

The facility has the appearance of a typical family home hidden in a quiet, respectable community. There are

no bold signs (they are not allowed) and the front gardens are well-maintained, typically colorful and appealing.

"In 2005, I came to Venice and purchased this home," Russo said. "Researching the home health care industry, I found there was a great need for people to live their life to the fullest and with my hospitality industry experience, I felt there was a need for the small, six-bed homes. After acquiring the 1962-built property, it was completely gutted and brought up to code."

From Garfield, N.J., he has worked in retailing of sporting goods and real estate. In the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, he excelled in the hospitality industry. A third generation in the restaurant industry, he spent 11 years at Fernwood Hotel & Resort and other hotels.

In 2011, Russo took ordination and is an ordained minister. For 19 years, he has been

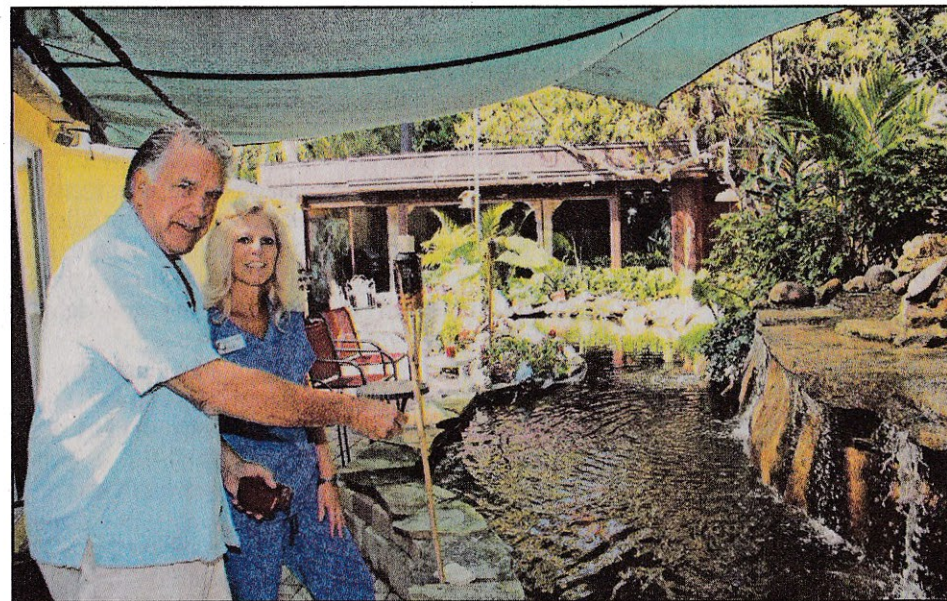


PHOTO BY ROGER BUTTON

At Magnolia Gardens in South Venice in the tranquil, relaxing and picturesque gardens, Frank Russo with Lorri Stedman feed the koi fish in the ponds by the waterfalls.

working out with the Navarro people in the New Mexico reservation. The Venice facility is to support ministries as he progresses God's Kingdom here and in western states.

Russo appreciates running Magnolia Gardens as it has been a learning experience, he said. During the past five years, he has operated with two

residents and it has given him an understanding of the real needs of the elderly.

He now has the opportunity to take on more clients. He can be reached at 941-412-4092.

"Lorri and I believe the Magnolia style of a small, six-bedded care home in a residential community provides the personal aspect

with home comforts that is pleasing as people age and require caring," he said.

"I hope to create more similar projects in this area, and (I hope) that others will want to implement similar projects in the state and country. Symbolically, Magnolia Gardens is your residence and home with love and assistance."