

Family-owned residential facility stands test of time

HEINZERLING FOUNDATION STARTED out as Peck O' Wee Ones in 1959, but now serves adults as well as children.

BY MELISSA KOSSLER DUTTON
| FOR BUSINESS FIRST

Although she doesn't communicate in traditional ways, Tom Radkiewicz's sister can let him know whether she likes the people who are taking care of her.

And since she moved into the Heinzerling Foundation six years ago, 62-year-old Ellen has given her brother lots of positive feedback.

"She's always pointing to people and smiling," said Radkiewicz, who serves as her guardian. "It was not that way in the traditional nursing home setting."

The family moved Ellen into the foundation, a residential facility that serves a community of non-ambulatory residents with severe or profound mental retardation and multiple disabilities, because of its reputation for providing a family-like atmosphere.

The foundation, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, was started by Otto and Mildred Heinzerling. The couple founded Peck O' Wee Ones in 1959 after learning that there was no place in Central Ohio providing care or services for infants with severe or profound mental retardation from birth to six months of age.

The nonprofit organization, which later became known as the Heinzerling Foundation, has continued to grow and expand services offered over the years.

COMMUNITY BASED

Today, the foundation serves 208 adults and children at its campus in southwestern Columbus.

Despite the expansions, the focus continues to remain on quality care delivered by compassionate individuals, said Otto and Mildred Heinzerling's grandson, Robert E. Heinzerling, who serves as executive director of the facility.

"Heinzerling Foundation is a family organization," said Heinzerling, whose mother and late



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Ellen Radkiewicz, who has lived at the Heinzerling Foundation for six years, got a balloon hat from Margaret Poulin Sept. 15 during the foundation's street-fair themed party in celebration of the nonprofit's 50th anniversary. Poulin works at Heinzerling in programming.

father also ran the organization. "That is part of the reason families bring their children and loved ones."

Residents receive services from a wide array of caregivers, including dietitians, therapists and education specialists.

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Robert E. Heinzerling | Heinzerling Foundation

During the six years that she's lived there, Ellen, who has a form of cerebral palsy, has learned new words and how to feed herself, her brother said.

She's enjoyed learning the new skills, said Radkiewicz, who is a Powell resident.

"Any independence she can have is a huge win," he said. "She gets a great deal of satisfaction."

Foundation leaders work to stay on top of industry best practices and the needs of the population it serves, Heinzerling said.

Administrators try to keep their focus on taking care of residents "in the way the community wants individuals served," he said.

Patients are served in large multibed facilities as well as in a group-home setting.

OUTDOORS FUN

The foundation is working on a new project that will provide increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and enjoyment, Heinzerling said.

The organization hopes to raise \$500,000 to create an outdoor sensory garden that will use plants, water and textured pavement to appeal to residents' senses.

The area would include an adaptive playground, a water activity fun area and a sound and visual garden.

The organization, which runs on state and federal funds, often looks to private donors to provide residents with extras, said Tanna Slaven, development coordinator.

The additional contributions pay for things such as field trips, adaptive toys and communicative devices that staff believe increase residents' quality of life, she said.

"We like to provide those items and experiences that any other kid would experience," she said. "Providing a loving, nurturing environment - that's our main focus."

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