

HEALTH

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New Site Offers Reviews of Retirement Homes

A free new Web site, www.seniordecision.com, claims to be the first where consumers can give a thumbs-up or -down to a retirement community or elder-care facility, based on personal experience.

Rob and Jennifer Liebreich of Takoma Park created the service after searching for guidance in choosing long-term care for a geographically distant family member. "We thought, what if we created a place for consumers to share their experi-

ence?" Rob Liebreich said.

Their site lets people rate assisted living, home health care, nursing homes, Alzheimer's facilities and retirement communities on a five-point scale and spell out the good and the bad. The Web site promises to keep reviewers' identities confidential on request. All reviews are screened. So far, only a few have been posted. Local facilities rated include Crescent Cities Center in Riverdale, Asbury Methodist Village in Gaithersburg and Brightwood Center in Beltsville.

Postings have been balanced between praise and complaints, Liebreich said.

Housing providers that subscribe to the site are notified when their facilities are reviewed and given preferential listing in searches on the site.

For best search results, type in the name of a specific provider or geographic location.

Advocacy groups such as the National Center for Family Caregivers and the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform welcome

the new tool. "I have been wanting this for some time," said Alice Hedt, coalition executive director.

Geriatric care manager Linda Aufderhaar, president of Senior Care Associates in Fairfax, cautions that consumers need a variety of tools, including those that use objective standards such as the federal government's www.medicare.gov/nhcompare.

"Consumers should be very careful in making such a complex decision," she said.

— Beth Baker

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