

NEWS

Dunson School apartments suit residents

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The residents gathered in the kitchen of the former Dunson School say they'd probably be there, together, on a regular day, even if they hadn't been asked.

"We all get together and have fun," said Lillian Floyd, 69, one of the first residents to move in. "We haven't had any fights yet."

The former school re-opened as the Richard W. Wolfe Apartments for senior citizens last fall after DASH for LaGrange Inc. acquired the property and federal grants to renovate the classroom and auditorium space into apartments. The first residents started arriving in December. Seventeen now call the former mill village school home, and 11 apartments still are available for rent.



Among the residents of Richard W. Wolfe Apartments are, from left, David Talley, Lillian Floyd, Joe Johnson, Bobby Delaney and Kathryn Reason.

"There are no better residents we could have had," said Elia Baltess, who manages the property for DASH. "They've taken over the programs, which is what we wanted."

The residents had a Christmas party hosted by Dunson United Methodist Church next door, a St. Patrick's Day party and other special events. They have bingo on Fridays, play dominoes and make dinners for each other.

Kathryn Reason, 84, the first resident to move in, agrees with Baltess and says Wolfe himself comes by to check on the residents. Wolfe was the manager of Dunson Mill.

"This was exactly what I needed," said Reason, who fell four times in her home before her family convinced her that she needed to move.

In the apartment setting, the residents look out for each other.

Floyd, who grew up in LaGrange but moved to Dayton, Ohio, before returning, says the community keeps her active. She belonged to a church and sang in two choirs in Ohio, so that kept her busy there.

"I enjoy people," she said. "Everyone here is so nice."

Joe Johnson, 88, attended the original Dunson School when it was on Cary Road and grew up in the Dunson Mill village. He watched the "new" school, his current home, be built when he was living across the street after he was married in 1938.

"You could look out the window and watch the progress," he recalled.

Johnson was a student of the well-known Duncan sisters. Mary Duncan was the principal of the school at both its locations. Her sister "Miss Edna" Duncan taught her in the sixth grade.

"She was my favorite," Johnson said.

Like Floyd, Johnson moved away but came back to LaGrange after retirement looking for a place to live. He was living in Amberwood Apartments when he heard about the school project.

"This building was all-new inside and didn't have an elevator," Johnson said. "It seemed better and inviting."

David Talley, 72, was born in LaGrange but raised in Atlanta. He moved back here in 1992 and like the others, was looking for a new place to live when the apartments opened.

Bobby Delaney, 65, is a former Navy man and LaGrange native.

"I like the neighbors," he said. "It's a nice place to live."

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