

## Lucy's Story



“Some years ago, amid all my ordinary days and usual activities, I had a most unusual urge: To carefully and honestly consider what would be likely to happen to me in the last years of my life. I had to face some gnarly facts: My inheritance is to live to be 90 plus, with advanced senile dementia or Alzheimer's. I do not want to be a burden to my daughter in her senior years, so I will have to find the kind of institution that I like. This is urgent because my father lived to be 94 1/2 without a brain in his head. My two aunts were each a mindless 90 when they died. My sister who is still alive at 91 hasn't recognized me for several years. I would rather die than live in one of the cardboard ant-hill like “golden years” senior retirement communities in the lower 48.

I want to stay in Haines. I want to keep my freedom to come and go as long as I am able. I love the scenery. I love my friends. I love the activities that one can enjoy here. I want to be safe, warm, and comfortable, and have a life of the mind as long as I have a mind. Since there was no institution in Haines that would make all that possible, we had to build one. I use the word “we” on purpose—Jim Studley has been an enthusiastic and effective worker and trustee from the beginning, and we have been strongly supported by the whole community.

Once we found the ideal property, four good-sized lots with a beautiful view two blocks from the center of town, we had to find an organization that was a recognized 501(c)(3) charity in order to apply for grants. Our first umbrella organization changed their minds after a couple of years. Back to the beginning, and this time we were lucky. St. Vincent de Paul in Juneau agreed to help us with our project, and they still do in some ways. After St. Vincent, Hospice of Haines stepped in with their 501 (c)(3) status until HAL was finally recognized by the IRS. Construction started in late summer 2008, continued all that hard winter of 2008-2009 and through summer 2009. We opened our doors in October last year and invited all the good people of Haines to come and rejoice with us in our gorgeous new home.

I now plan to stay in Haines in a warm, comfortable, safe place for the rest of my life. I am free to come and go as I wish. I still have my boat to go cruising, or crabbing, or fishing. I love it here.

It has only taken us about 9 years.”

--Lucy Harrell

*Haines Assisted Living (HAL) opened its doors in October 2009.*

*This innovative project overcomes many common barriers to community based social solutions in rural Alaska. A combination of funding sources--eight individual grants, citizen donations, and in-kind contributions built a \$4.3 million facility that is the first of its kind in our state or probably anywhere in the world. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) construction criteria make it one of the most energy-efficient buildings in Alaska. That makes it affordable to operate even in high cost areas. The resident services component utilizes advanced computer technology that allows a small, caring staff to maintain awareness of resident needs with as little intrusion as possible.*

*Most important, as Lucy says, it is a warm, comfortable, home-like environment shared with friends.*

*The St. Vincent de Paul Society of Juneau responded to the request from folks in Haines because building a facility that serves seniors in their last years, in their home community, meets our mission of social responsibility. The unique characteristic of HAL is that, unlike most public grant-funded projects, it is not restricted to any particular economic class. Seniors will enjoy a community that accurately reflects*

*the society in which we live—all colors, all faiths, all cultures, all income levels. Two of HAL's eight units are expressly reserved for very-low income seniors in need of assisted living. This next year, five independent living apartments for low-income seniors will be added to the complex when St. Lucy's Senior Living opens. When completed, the entire facility will be 8 assisted living (up to 10 residents) and 5 independent living apartments, all for seniors, with about half available and subsidized for low-income households. All units are of the same design, same features, and same quality. About \$5.7 million eventually will be spent on development and construction and more than \$100,000 on staff training and resident service technology, including a Tele Medicine contribution from the Alaska Mental Health Trust.*

*Haines Assisted Living and St. Lucy's Senior Living offer a development model for rural Alaska. However, as Lucy points out, it takes time, it takes commitment, and most of all it takes a caring community rich in Alaska "Can Do" spirit.*

*Congratulations to the people of Haines, Haines Assisted Living, Inc. and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.*

[www.hainesassistedliving.org](http://www.hainesassistedliving.org)