

# The Dallas Morning News

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Business Section – Front Page

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## A Difficult Search Made Easier

### Gilbert Guide Helps Families Find Living Arrangements for Elderly

By Bob Moos/The Dallas Morning News

Like other boomers who have become their parents' caregivers, Connie Valentine of Addison has toured senior living communities to find a place for her mother.

Her 87-year-old mother enjoys good health and still lives by herself in McAllen, but Ms. Valentine worries about the future and wants her to move to Dallas.

"The search can be bewildering," the daughter said. "There are so many choices. And just because some place looks good from the outside doesn't mean it provides good care."

Beginning this week, caregivers such as Ms. Valentine can consult the Gilbert Guide, a book that reviews long-term care facilities and services in Dallas-Fort Worth.

"Think of us as a Consumer Reports for long-term care," said Jill Gilbert, president and chief executive of Gilbert Guide Inc. "We help people make informed decisions."

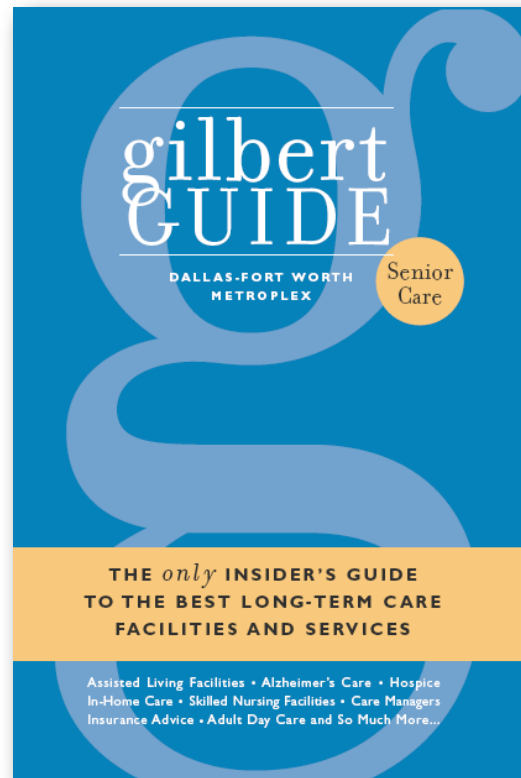
Ms. Gilbert's company is publishing a series of guidebooks for families who don't know where to turn for help when an elderly parent needs professional care.

The first book, which came out last year, covered the San Francisco area, where the company is based. The Dallas-Fort Worth edition is the second and will be followed by other regional guides.

Social workers familiar with the Gilbert Guide say it's carving out a niche that holds potential as the population ages.

Four in 10 older adults can expect to spend time in a nursing home after a hospital stay or because of a chronic condition, according to MetLife's Mature Market Institute.

"The book's truly unique," said Donna Schempp, program director of the Family Caregiver Alliance. "It's developing a solid reputation as a source of credible information."



Unlike other senior living guidebooks, the Gilbert Guide declines advertising so that its readers don't have to worry about potential conflicts of interest, Ms. Gilbert said.

Gilbert Guide Inc. also hires teams of geriatric care managers, registered nurses and social workers to inspect facilities, interview staffs and write reviews.

The 424-page Dallas-Fort Worth book, which retails for \$34.95, critiques 163 nursing facilities, assisted living communities and adult day-care services.

The guide also evaluates in-home care services in the area.

The company said it was drawn to the Dallas-Fort Worth market because of the many senior living choices here and the confusion that can create for consumers.

"The book's value lies in giving families a place to start looking," Ms. Schempp said. "That's important because many of these decisions must be made quickly."

### **An added resource**

Local agencies such as the Senior Source and the Alzheimer's Association and social service professionals such as geriatric care managers often help families with their research.

Still, many families don't know about those agencies and care managers, and rely on word of mouth to find a nursing home or assisted living center for Mom or Dad.

"We're trying to help people narrow their searches so that they only have to visit three facilities before deciding," Ms. Gilbert said.

Kay Paggi, a geriatric care manager in Richardson, was one of the principal researchers for the Dallas-Fort Worth guide. She visited about 50 facilities last fall.

After helping hundreds of families arrange care for loved ones over 15 years, Ms. Paggi said she knew exactly what to look for and which questions to ask on her tours.

Besides checking on obvious concerns such as safety and cleanliness, she asked for copies of menus and activity calendars to learn how well residents were fed and entertained.

"Then there were the intangibles, such as whether the tour guides greeted residents by name as they showed me around," she said. "That alone told me a lot."

### **Selective listings**

Though the Gilbert Guide team visited more than 200 facilities, Ms. Gilbert said the book includes only the ones reviewers recommend as safe and caring.

Nursing homes that fared poorly in government inspections were excluded.

"The communities we're publishing are the ones we'd trust with our own families," Ms. Gilbert said. The guidebook has an easy-to-understand format. It begins with an explanation of the different kinds of senior care and how families typically pay for each.

Ms. Paggi said the Dallas-Fort Worth edition includes nursing homes that accept Medicaid because the publishers realized those are especially difficult to find.

Each review covers issues such as amenities, costs and staffing: Is there a beauty shop? How often do rates increase and by how much? Are nurses on duty 24/7?

The reviewers also rate each community in such categories as the facility's condition, aesthetics, food, activities, dementia care and accessibility to medical services.

"Our written reviews allow our researchers to share their personal impressions of their visits, noting, for example, whether the rooms had their own thermostats," Ms. Gilbert said.

The book concludes with a listing of 102 "gems" and "helpful organizations" – related businesses that do things such as run estate sales and sell incontinence supplies.

Besides selling the guide in bookstores and online ([www.gilbertguide.com](http://www.gilbertguide.com)), Ms. Gilbert intends to use nontraditional outlets such as doctors' offices, hospital gift shops and pharmacies.

"Our plan is to have a national presence, covering many markets," she said.

### **Expansion plans**

After the Dallas-Fort Worth edition's release this week, the company will roll out guides for Northern California and New York City this spring and summer, and then Los Angeles, Florida, Las Vegas, Phoenix and Tucson.

The publisher said it will regularly update each guide to keep pace with the rapid changes in the senior living industry.

Ms. Gilbert also expects the books to appeal to long-distance caregivers.

At the Family Caregiver Alliance in San Francisco, Ms. Schempp said she often directs out-of-town caregivers to the Gilbert Guide.

"A daughter flew here from New York and had only four days to find a place for her mother," she said. "The book saved her from having to start from scratch."

Ms. Gilbert said families who use the guide and do their homework can avoid placing a loved one in the wrong nursing home.

"Moving once is traumatic enough for an older person. You don't want to do it again too soon," she said. "Our goal is to eliminate the guesswork and spare families a lot of grief."

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A sample entry from the Gilbert Guide for Dallas-Fort Worth shows information about Arden Courts of Richardson. Reviews cover issues such as amenities, costs and staffing.

## Assisted Living

### ARDEN COURTS OF RICHARDSON A/D

410 Buckingham Road  
Richardson, TX 75081

(972) 235-1200  
www.hcr-manorcare.com

#### GILBERT GUIDE OBSERVATIONS

Administration & Staff	Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ	Dietary & Food Selection	Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ
Facility Aesthetics	Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ	Activities	Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ
Facility Condition & Safety	Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ	Alzheimer's & Dementia Capabilities	Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ
Residents	Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ Ⓔ		

#### DETAILS

Year Built: 1999  
Year Remodeled: Ongoing  
Current Mgmt. Since: 2001  
No. of Floors: 1  
Resident Capacity: 60

#### SPECIAL

Alzheimer's/Dementia Only Facility  
Diets Accommodated: Diabetic, Low-fat, Low-salt  
Proximity to Emergency Svcs.: Under 8 miles  
Nearby shopping and entertainment  
No pets allowed

#### STAFF

LPN: 84 hours/week, On-call 24/7  
Caregiver Training: Dementia, Ethics, Family communication, Grief, Patient transfers, Stress management, Transition issues, Validation therapy  
Criminal Background Check: Yes  
Principal Staff Language(s): English  
Other Staff Language(s): Spanish

#### FACILITY FEATURES

Activities/Recreation  
Beauty/Barber Shop (\$)   
Chapel Services  
Facility Parking  
Guest Meals (\$)   
Outside Patio/Gardens  
Private Dining Room  
24-hour Security

#### ROOM FEATURES

Furnished  
Grab Bars  
Shared & Private Bathrooms  
Temperature Controls

#### COSTS

PRICES MAY INCREASE. PLEASE CALL FOR MOST CURRENT INFORMATION.

Alzheimer's Unit	\$3,700/month for private room
Respite Stays	\$125/day for private room
Costs of Care	Included in monthly rate
Rate Increase	Every 1.5 years
Reimbursement	LTCI, Private pay

#### PORTRAIT

Arden Courts is located in an upscale urban neighborhood. The building sits on a large gated lot, allowing residents and their guests to stroll and socialize outdoors. The homelike decor is simple and inviting. Each wing of the building has a kitchen and living room. Residents' rooms are cozy and neat. Each room has a window and shelves for residents to display personal items.

The dining area is set up like an eat-in kitchen, a nice alternative to the standard formal dining room. The kitchen staff offers a menu of hearty lunches and light dinners. For example, country fried steak with mashed potatoes and green beans was served at lunch when we visited. For dinner, residents chose from a menu of assorted soups and sandwiches. Wide hallways are equipped with handrails. Extra seating areas in the halls are perfect for residents to catch up on their reading or bird watch.

The outdoor area is a lovely refuge. Residents enjoy a putting green among the trimmed, open landscape, and use their green thumbs in the gardening area. The staff organizes daily activities such as "coffee talk," board games, memory stimulation and fitness instruction. We witnessed a group of residents engaged in a game of dominoes. The activities run by the staff give one the impression that they are well prepared to accommodate the special needs of these Alzheimer's residents.