



A little piece of heaven

Murfreesboro's Westbrooks Towers provides a safe, good place to live for older adults on a limited income

Patsy Smith is 68 years old, and living her best life at Westbrooks Towers in Murfreesboro.

"I'm safe, I love the people here, and I want to stay here forever," she said. "It's a little piece of heaven."

Smith was born and raised in Murfreesboro, and is a graduate of Central High School. "I'm one of five kids," she said. "In fact, I'm the baby." Smith's father broke his back and became permanently disabled when she was a little girl, which meant the family had no income and had to move to "the projects," according to Smith.

"We lived on January Street for many years, she said. "That area had a bad reputation." Later on, when Smith was grown, she moved to public housing on Academy Street.

Smith has been married twice and has no children, but due to a chronic heart condition, has never been able to work.

She helped care for her mother as she aged. Smith's mother was 89 years old when she died.

"My momma is my guardian angel," Smith said. "I know she helped me get to this place."

Three years ago Smith moved to Westbrook Towers, a high-rise apartment building that is a subsidized Tax Credit property for older adults. Rents are based on 30 percent of the tenant's adjust gross income. Currently, Westbrooks Towers has no vacancies, and the waiting list is closed.

"We know subsidized housing for older adults is too scarce in Murfreesboro and Rutherford County," said Thomas Rowe, Chief Executive Officer of Murfreesboro Housing Authority, which operates Westbrooks Towers. "One of our long-term goals is adding more of this type of housing to the community."

Patsy Smith admits she didn't want to move to Westbrooks Towers at first. "I was scared. I didn't know anybody," she said. "I have arthritis, and I use a walker and a wheelchair. I had friends at my old place so it was hard to move.

"But Miss Gina and the whole staff made me feel welcome," Smith added. "Everybody is so nice here. They care about you." Gina Davis has managed

Westbrooks Towers since 2019; she has worked in public housing for many years.

“We work hard to be responsive to our residents and make them comfortable,” Davis said.

Smith spends her time working 300-piece puzzles she buys at Wal-Mart, completing about ten puzzles each month. When she finishes a puzzle, she donates it to the St. Clair Senior Center, which is next door to Westbrooks Towers.

Smith likes to cook, and makes good biscuits, tuna casserole and potato salad, she says. “My older sisters taught me to cook when I was five years old.”

She also spends time cleaning her apartment, which is set up for a person who is disabled. Smith runs a Swiffer mop from her wheelchair. “I like a clean place,” she said.

Despite her initial fears about moving, Smith decided early on to make the best of it. “I’m nice and I expect other people to be nice,” she said. “I’m a happy person, and I just hope people will judge me with their hearts. I’m a pretty good person, once you get to know me.”

For more information, contact Terri Donovan at 615.945.4794

###

