



WRITING SAMPLE

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How Marbridge Makes a Difference

By Gretchen Heber

Just south of downtown Austin, Marbridge's 200 verdant acres provide a lush, expansive, educational, and downright fun home to adults with intellectual disabilities who enjoy highly tailored and always-loving care and support from the campus's devoted staff.

With three communities providing various levels of care, [Marbridge](#) is the answer to many families' dreams of a loving and beyond-suitable environment for their loved ones. The Village offers independent and semi-independent living; The Ranch provides assisted living for folks who need a bit more supervision and structure; The Villa administers skilled nursing care for those in need of significant medical care.

50-year-old Lizzie lives at The Village, and is very happy there. Her favorite things about Marbridge are "going to activities and church and being with my friends that I love dearly – just being here," she says. "It's a fun place to learn and grow."

Life for those who live at Marbridge is more fun than Friday night at the state fair. Art programs, bingo, tug of war, and jaunts around Austin are just some of the activities community members enjoy.

"I go to coffee one Saturday per month with my community," says Lizzie, a four-year resident of Marbridge. "Sometimes I have church functions after church or go to a movie or go out to eat. I also take photography and that's interesting to learn about."

In addition, a modern athletic facility and wellness center gives residents a chance to break a sweat on the basketball court, or cool off in the swimming pool. Lizzie enjoys bocce, swimming and biking, and one her favorite memories is "going to the sports banquet because there's a lot of comradery – there's no I in team. It takes all of us."

Life at Marbridge, however, all is not fun and games. At its core, Marbridge's mission is one of empowering its residents to scale greater heights, to achieve more independence and to pursue and attain goals that may once have seemed impossible.

Residents receive training in life skills such as shopping, cooking, healthy eating and money management. They can also receive career training and job placement assistance. Some residents enroll in college-like programs, or other, less-intensive, coursework.

“I take skills for life [classes] and I take geography. I like taking those classes,” says Libbi.

Many of the residents enjoy Marbridge’s horticulture therapy program, which can help improve memory, cognitive abilities, and social and language skills. Working with plants also encourages residents to learn to work independently, follow directions and problem solve.

Another Marbridge program, equestrian therapy, offers similar benefits. Working with horses has been so beneficial to the residents that Marbridge is [seeking donations](#) for a new, more functional equestrian facility. The Creed Ford III Therapeutic Riding Ranch will replace the makeshift — but much adored — facilities Marbridge horse lovers use now. Named after a well-loved Marbridge supporter, the new amenities will be better suited to the needs of residents and will facilitate a higher level of riding and learning.

While philanthropic efforts are important to Marbridge’s success, volunteers are no less critical to the organization’s operation. From helping in a training class to simply holding a hand, any number of opportunities are available to individuals and groups who wish help these [amazing Austinites](#).

Lizzie encourages guests to visit Marbridge to learn more about its offerings and about the people who make it so special. “Marbridge is a lovely place and I think you can learn a lot if you come and visit,” she says.

Nestled near the intersection of Bliss Spillar Road and FM1626, Marbridge is a hidden gem that’s polished brightly by the dedicated staff who work to create a loving and educational experience for its residents. It’s truly a jewel Austin can be proud of.