

# The Malone Telegram

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## Valehaven adult home closes, low state reimbursement rate cited

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MALONE — The Valehaven Adirondack Manor Home for Adults closed permanently on Friday, after 40 years of service. The final announcement came as part of a press release from the Empire State Association of Assisted Living (ESAAL) on Monday.



The facility — located near Arsenal Green Park — began looking for alternative living spaces for 30 residents earlier this year, citing a gap between operating costs and state funding.

Lisa Clark, Valehaven’s administrator for the past nine years, saw the last of her residents depart the home on Wheeler Avenue on Friday. In the ESAAL press release, she spoke about the emotional toll the closure has taken on residents, their families, and Valehaven staff. “There have

been tears and sleepless night,” said Clark. “My residents and staff definitely had my heart and were like my own family — each and every one of them. I have given them all my number and address. I told them all I’m there to advocate for them if they need me.”

The press release from ESAAL blamed the closure of Valehaven and other similar facilities on the state failing to “authorize an increase in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) rate.”

“New York’s adult care facilities (ACFs), commonly known as adult homes, enriched housing programs, or assisted living residences, provide a critical service for the elderly population, providing housing, food, care management, and assistance with all facets of life for their residents, including their personal care needs and assistance with medications,” read the ESAAL press release. “For low-income seniors and disabled individuals, SSI pays for all these services. Without the ACF living options, the majority of these low-income seniors will unnecessarily end up in costly nursing homes.”

The current SSI rate in New York is \$41 per day; this rate was set in 2007 — just the second increase in 25 years. James Kane Jr., operating partner of Adirondack Manor HFA — which includes Valehaven — said that a substantial part of the residence’s revenue comes from SSI payments provided by the federal government and the state.

Kane told The Telegram in June that the federal government did introduce a \$1 increase for cost-of-living in 2017, as part of a series of incremental increases. The state, however, has not kept pace, and makes up the larger part of the funding. “The rate is inadequate. We are simply unable to provide care and services 24 hours, seven days per week for \$41 per day,” said Kane, noting that the facility had been operating at a financial loss for some time. “We hoped the state would step up and authorize a SSI rate increase; however when it failed to do so earlier this year, we made the difficult

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**James Kane Jr., operating partner of Adirondack Manor HFA**

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decision to submit a closure plan to the state Department of Health.”

Kane also noted in June that the lack of a rate increase was further complicated by the planned increases in the state’s minimum wage set to be phased in over the next few years. Adirondack Manor used to operate 14 homes; following the closure of Valehaven, only six will remain.

“While the state SSI rate has remained frozen, per person costs for ACFs have skyrocketed,” said Lisa Newcomb, ESAAL executive director. “In addition to Valehaven, dozens of SSI facilities have closed over the last several years — forcing low-income seniors to search for other care options.”

The press release noted that the state Legislature has approved a bill — A.6715B/S.6732 — to gradually increase the SSI rate over the next five years. The measure is currently awaiting Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo’s signature.

“We need additional quality, affordable long-term care options today more than ever,” said Newcomb. “Without an increase in SSI, more residence doors will close and seniors across New York will be forced prematurely into nursing homes, threatening their independence and exponentially raising costs for the state.”

A rate increase for the SSI was included in both the Assembly and Senate drafts of the 2017-18 state budget, but were not ultimately accepted by the governor’s office in the final budget.