

## Assisted-living facility investigated after rape alleged

An assisted-living facility is under scrutiny after a mentally disabled man was charged with raping an Alzheimer's patient.

Wed, Jan. 16, 2008

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*PHOTO CAPTION: Darryl McGee, a former resident of Munne Center, is accused of rape.*



Darryl McGee, mentally disabled with a criminal past, was found naked last month inside the bedroom of a 71-year-old woman suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

"All I wanted was some [sex]," he blurted out to Miami-Dade detectives, according to a police report.

The woman had been savagely raped, Miami-Dade police say, and McGee was charged with sexual battery on a mentally handicapped person.

McGee and his alleged victim shared this connection: They lived in the same wing at the Munné Center, a Southwest Miami-Dade assisted-living facility that touts itself as embracing feng shui and nurturing ``harmonious relationships among people, their environment and the Earth."

The rape case has sparked a state investigation into the Munné Center -- McGee was in the process of getting kicked out -- and has highlighted a history of problems at the facility, 17250 SW 137th Ave.

Alejandro Perez, who has owned the center for two years, defended it, saying the staff takes care of its residents and the place is well managed.

"It's a beautiful facility," he told The Miami Herald in a recent interview.

Said Brian Lee, the state's long-term care ombudsman : ``They could have taken a different course of action to remove this resident from the area. It could have potentially prevented this rape."

Earlier in December, two days after McGee was arrested, Lee toured the facility. According to his report, he found:

- Residents suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia were often locked in their rooms, which would hamper evacuations in case of fire. There was also a lack of staffers to monitor residents who might wander from room to room.

- Residents often received tongue lashings by the "verbally belligerent" owner. In a fit of rage, residents said the owner destroyed the handicap accessibility mechanism at the center's front door.
- Residents never had enough food. Snacks were rare. "One resident stated that the food is so poor, he refused to go to the dining room," Lee wrote.
- Personal care supplies often ran out. Staff bought adult diapers, ``but only enough for the day's supply." When toilet paper ran out, staffers used brown industrial paper towels to clean demented patients who had defecated on themselves.
- Advertised recreational activities -- such as bingo, Bible studies and board games -- were not being held for residents.

"I've never seen such an outcry from residents who want to change conditions there or get out of there," Lee said in an interview.

The center's owner, Perez, called the allegations ``all false."

Lee's report was issued after the state found 63 violations at the facility in February, including insufficient staff training, shoddy record-keeping and poor conditions for residents. The center later corrected those violations, according to the state.

Shelisha Durden, spokeswoman for the state's Agency for Health Care Administration, declined to comment because of the ongoing probe into the center.

## **LICENSE ISSUES**

The agency said the center's limited mental health license, which allows it to house Alzheimer's patients, is still valid.

Lee, the ombudsman, says the state is close to revoking that license.

The Munné Center was founded in 1998 by developer Raul Munné, who received praise for building homes in South Miami-Dade that withstood Hurricane Andrew.

The center was mentioned positively in a 1999 Time magazine article about elder care.

The saffron-colored facility sits on five acres and features maid service, a chapel and a beauty salon, according to its website.

There are 96 rooms for residents as well as doctor exam rooms, nurse stations and a ``state of the art therapy room."

But problems at the center have been mounting.

On Dec. 26, Premier American Bank filed a foreclosure lawsuit against Perez, the owner, saying the mortgage on the property was not being paid.

In an interview this week, Perez claimed the suit was due to paperwork errors and will be cleared up soon.

Court records, however, show the suit is still pending.

As for McGee, he is jailed at the Metro West Detention Center on a charge of sexual battery on a mentally defective victim.

Perez said that about a month before McGee's arrest, the center had told him he would be kicked out for unruly behavior.

McGee's mother said that was not true.

#### **45-DAY NOTICE**

By law, a resident must receive a 45-day notice before he can be kicked out.

Perez said McGee had been properly supervised and before his recent behavior ``he had been normal. We didn't know he had problems."

One resident, who asked to remain anonymous because he feared retaliation from center administration, said McGee "talked about being a gangster from the streets" and often verbally sparred with other residents.

"All he would talk about [is having] sex with women. He had no business being there," the resident said.

Suffering from a chronic mental disability, McGee has lived in various assisted-living facilities in Tennessee and Louisiana without problems, said his mother, Delores Coleman of Memphis, Tenn.

McGee has been at the Munné Center since March.

Tennessee records show he has been arrested 11 times since 1998 on charges ranging from possession of cocaine to simple assault and vandalism.

His mother acknowledged his past run-ins but stressed ``he has no violence in his record."

Coleman said residents in McGee's ward were not receiving proper supervision.

"There are two victims. Darryl is a victim," Coleman said.

His defense attorney, public defender Tara O'Brien, said it was ``very early in the case to make any kind of comment."

She added: ``It seems to be a shame they weren't watching these people closer."