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Special facility in Massachusetts giving ALS patients their independence back

Hidden gem tucked away in Chelsea truly changing lives

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CHELSEA, Mass. - In the shadow of the Tobin Bridge, a hidden gem tucked away in Chelsea is truly changing lives in Massachusetts.

The minute you walk inside the [Leonard Florence Center for Living](#), it's clear this is a special place. That has a lot to do with the two men who put their hearts and minds into creating this vision.

"I call it my neshamah. What it means is my inner soul," said chief executive officer Barry Berman. "I feel I was put on this earth to help people. To see how we have changed the lives of people with ALS is just incredible and extremely meaningful."

It is also revolutionary.

Steve Saling was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis when he was just 38 years old. An accomplished architect, Saling was at a conference when he met Berman, who just happened to be looking to create state-of-the-art care at the assisted living center.

"Despite the dire prognosis, I knew that technology would allow me to survive this cruel disease," Saling said. "I never wanted to live in a nursing home, kept alive but with no life. My dream was to survive ALS in a highly-automated smart home, in a place that I would be proud to call home. I was desperately searching for a solution."

And that is just what Berman and Saling have created — a place where technology is combined with the best care to give its residents their independence.

"Most people with ALS want to stay home rather than suffer the indignity of moving to a traditional nursing home," Saling said. "I hope for a world in which the Leonard Florence Center for Living is the standard of care in America."

Berman said the center is already changing the lives of patients who never thought they would have their dignity or independence back.

"They come here and, all of a sudden, they become alive and living their life. It's powerful," he said.

Just ask Michael Scott. A member of Mensa, Scott was getting ready to pursue his doctoral degree in chemistry when he was diagnosed with ALS.

"I have a single room along with a private bathroom and shower, all of which allows for a more dignified experience," Scott said. "I also had the opportunity to personalize my room any way I would like."

The center uses software called "Peak," which connects tablets to any motorized equipment in the building. That means Scott and other patients are able to get around without having to wait for a staff member to help them.

"The technology makes living here so comfortable that I think of this as my home," Scott said.

The center also sets up adventures for patients that they never thought they would have again, like going sailing or visiting the New England Aquarium.

"We have shown it is possible," Saling said. "We want to change the world."