

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: Gloria Harrison



Gloria Harrison has lived at Commons Senior for 21 years.
Photo courtesy of Gloria Harrison.

Gloria Harrison has spent more than two decades living at Commons Senior. She moved to the building when she retired from the Newark Public School system, where she served as a teacher's assistant for many years. She worked with special needs students in a variety of buildings throughout the city.

"I worked at so many of the different little schools," she said. "I loved it. I love working with children."

Harrison was born and raised in Jersey City. After she finished school, she got married and moved to Newark. She worked at Babyland on South Orange Avenue as an attendant to the infants. After enjoying that experience, she decided to take some courses and became a TA, which she did for the remainder of her career.

Harrison is one of 11 children and says the majority of her family members worked in education. Some of her younger relatives have continued that tradition and serve as teachers and principals, some right in Newark.

After retiring from the school system 21 years ago, Harrison moved to Commons Senior, 140 South Orange Ave., Newark, where she has lived in the same apartment. She likes the atmosphere of the building and that it's quiet, particularly at night.

"She's a nice, kind, lovable lady," said Commons Senior Care Coordinator Jill Derios. "When she's able, she participates in the building activities."

Harrison is a member of the Advisory Board for Commons Senior and has been involved in building happenings for many years. This year she hasn't been able to do as much because of her health, but she tries to participate in functions.

"I help out where I can, when I can," she said.

Harrison has two living sons and a daughter who is deceased. She has 10 grandchildren, a host of great-grandchildren and a great-great-grandchild on the way.

At the age of 86, Harrison is grateful to have family members close by. Her children and grandchildren help her get around in their cars and visit her often.

In her spare time, Harrison likes to draw and decorate for the holidays. She puts up decorations in her windows, a skill she brought from her time in the classroom. She used to decorate the entire floor, but decided to stick to her own windows and door this year. She also used to sew and make clothes.

When she's in her apartment, Harrison likes to watch television, particularly tennis and golf.

"Plus I can watch the children in the community schools. I'm right in the middle of all of them," Harrison said. "I sit here looking out the window and laugh to myself. I enjoy it."