

A Family Business Evolves

Creative thinking is nothing new to the Ramey family, owners of the Northern Queen Inn on Railroad Avenue in Nevada City.

Originally conceived as a mobile home park by patriarch Roy E. Ramey, the family built a resort motel instead after listening to neighbor's concerns.

The resort has grown and evolved over the years with the addition of more motel rooms, cottages and chalets; the opening of the Trolley Junction Restaurant in 1987; and the development of the Gardens (used for weddings and private parties) and a swimming pool.

But when it came time to upgrade and remodel one of the original buildings, the hospitality industry was entering a major slump. So the family decided to transform the 16,000 square foot building instead, gutting it to create 25 apartments for active seniors. As Ramey's daughter Robyn Adams says, "In this economy we had to get creative. There's no two ways about it."

Adams did a lot of research on other motel properties that have tried this and found that occupancy rates for the remaining motel rooms actually pick up as people come to visit parents and grandparents. So taking on this new business actually helps the existing business as well. In

fact, the Northern Queen offers a discounted rate for visiting family members. The resort still has 30 motel rooms available in addition to the cottages and chalets.

As they are already operating the motel and restaurant, supplementary services are easy

housekeeping is also available, and small pets are permitted.

The Rameys became aware of the need for senior housing when Ramey, Senior, became ill with Alzheimer's. He died in 2007 at age 83. Since he had always handled the architectural design of the buildings on the property, Adams was in new territory dealing with the planning commission, architects and builders needed for the renovation. She worked closely with Sitrine Architecture, contrac-

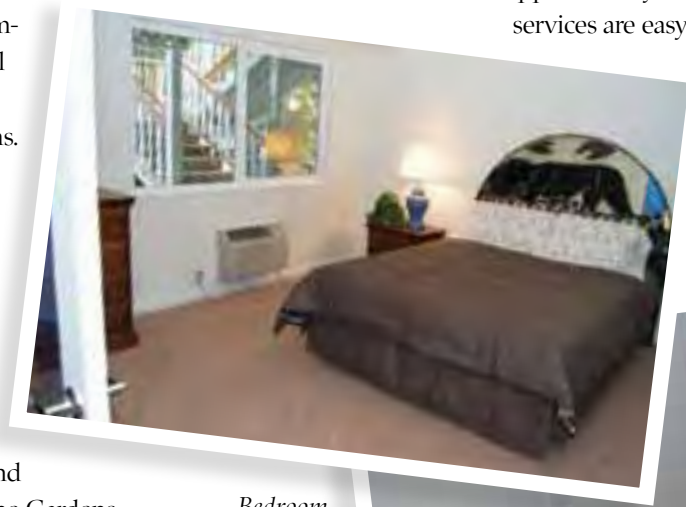
tors Bruce Robinson and Gary Tittle, and the FREED Center for Independent Living on the design and construction. Local suppliers were used in every aspect of the remodel. The sprinkler system and the

lift (elevator) were

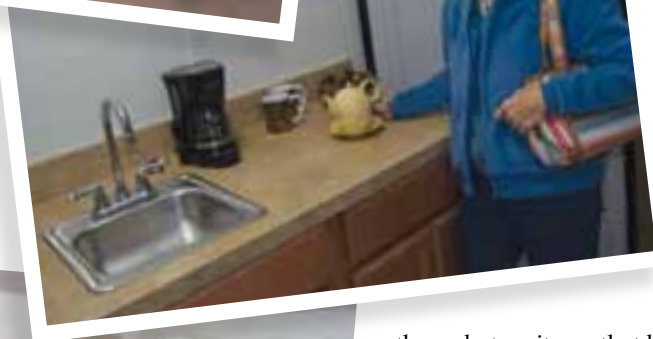
the only two items that had to be handled by out-of-towners.

The workers were amazed at the quality of the original building, which had been constructed by Ramey and his son, Roy Ramey, Junior, in 1976. The roof lines were still straight and dry rot was almost nonexistent.

The new apartment building, called The Village, opens this month, and the Ramey family and their staff are excited about the prospect of having people living on the property full-time. In addition to generating regular, sustainable income throughout the year, they like the idea that this family business will be taking care of 25 new sets of family members. 🐦



Bedroom, tea station and lounge at The Village at Northern Queen Inn



to provide. The apartments don't have full kitchens (they have "tea stations" instead), but a continental breakfast and full dinner (included in the monthly rental price) will be catered by the Trolley Junction and served in a new dining room located on the ground floor. Weekly