



Home Care Services for Seniors

(703) 750-3170

www.readyhands.com

January—March 2005

## News for Clients and Friends

### To Our Clients and Friends...

Ready Hands Home Care owes most of its success to the kind referrals we receive from clients, senior-serving professionals, local churches and other individuals and organizations in our community. It's not always possible to find out a name and say a personal "thank you," but when we can, we do.

In addition, this quarter we are beginning a new program to recognize and appreciate those who have mentioned our name to prospective home care clients. See the box at right for more details.

As 2005 gets underway, we look forward to another year serving the needs of the seniors and families who mean so much to us.

*Granger Benson, M.D.*

*Sue Benson, R.N.*

### \$100 Gift Certificate Says

#### "Thank You For Your Referrals"

The following people and organizations have recently recommended Ready Hands to individuals exploring home care options. To express our appreciation, we are entering their names into a drawing for a \$100 gift certificate. We will have a new drawing each calendar quarter. If we missed you, let us know and we'll include your name next time!

**Carolyn Wingrove-Thomas, Virginia Hospital Center Rehab Department, Lila Klee, Peg Bixler, Mrs. Francis Monan, David Kahn of Northwest Services, Barbara Payne of ElderCare Strategies, David Kendall, David Heiby, Commonwealth Rehab, Suzie Dawes, Lore Editin, Inova VNA Home Health, Fairfax Hospital Social Services.**

## Get The Most From Your Medical Visits

Many people give little thought to making their doctor's visits as productive as possible. Here are a few tips for doing just that. They also apply to visits with other types of health professionals.

### Be A Good "Historian"

You might think that doctors learn the most about you from examinations and tests, but in fact it is what you communicate verbally that provides the main clues. This information is called the medical history. Come prepared to relate the history accurately.

Say you are having stomach pain. What does it feel like? Sharp? Stabbing? Gnawing? Where is it located in the abdomen? When did it start? Does anything make it worse or better? What else have you noticed since the stomach pain began? The answers to such questions will guide everything else your doctor recommends, so try to think about them in advance.

### Write It Down

Bring notes on the items you need to cover so that you don't forget something important. Make sure you prioritize your concerns, however, and be sensitive to time limitations. If you have several problems to address, you may need to schedule a follow-up visit.

It's also a good idea to take notes during or immediately after your visit, so that you are clear on instructions and recommendations. If you are unsure about something, ask.

### Bring a Family Member

For important visits, it helps to have a family member (or trusted friend) in the exam room with you. He or she can relate observations that may not be as evident to you, or that you simply overlooked. A family member can also help you later to remember important recommendations or instructions.

Sometimes your family member can help by serving as your advocate, especially if he or she is politely assertive about making sure your concerns are addressed. This is particularly beneficial if you're not feeling well yourself.

### Watch the Chit Chat

Casual talk may lead to a greater sense of trust and satisfaction with your doctor, but it can also interfere with having your health needs adequately addressed. Don't just assume that if the conversation continues in an informal way, there will be plenty of time for dealing with your important health issues later. There may not be. Better to turn the discussion toward matters at hand.

Continued on page 2

## Dorothy Addae Receives Quarterly Recognition Award

This quarter our award goes to Nurse Aide Dorothy Addae. Dorothy joined Ready Hands in June 2004. Since then, as a live-in aide, she has shown the kinds of qualities that Ready Hands truly values and our clients appreciate.



Dorothy truly cares about her client. She is cheerful, energetic and reliable. She arrives on time, and she reports her hours and turns in her Weekly Work Record forms regularly. Dorothy also has good judgment, and always calls the office when something needs to be reported.

It was a fortunate day for Ready Hands when Dorothy applied for employment with us, and we hope she stays for a very long time.

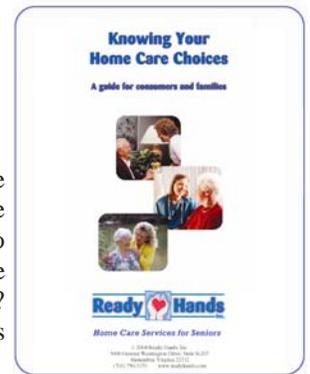
**Thank you, Dorothy!**

## Ready Hands Develops Free Home Care Guide

What personnel provide home care services? How are home care companies structured? Who pays for home care? Should you hire a home care worker on your own? Suppose a parent or loved one resists needed care?

These are just some of the many questions facing individuals and families as they grapple with how to obtain needed help in a residential setting. To make the job easier, Ready Hands has created a 28-page pamphlet entitled “Knowing Your Home Care Choices: A Guide For Consumers.” It is filled with useful information on this increasingly important topic, including: clear, unbiased explanations of home care alternatives; a checklist of questions to ask agency representatives; interviewing tips; employer responsibilities if you hire independently; and much more.

To obtain a free copy, just call the Ready Hands office at 703-750-3170.



## Tips For Getting A Good Night's Sleep

A good night's sleep is important for our energy level, mood, mental performance—and even our immune system. With aging, the need for sleep does not decline, but the quality of sleep often does. As many as 50% of seniors experience difficulty getting to sleep, frequent nighttime awakenings or prolonged periods of lying awake.

Sleep difficulties have many causes. Yes, certain body chemicals that govern sleep-wake rhythms do decline with age. But medications, lifestyle behaviors and various medical conditions play a large role too. Arthritis, breathing

disorders, heart problems, bladder or prostate disorders and primary sleep disorders like sleep apnea syndrome are just a few examples.

Regardless of the cause, experts advise certain lifestyle measures to improve sleep quality:

- ⇒ Reserve the bedroom for its intended purposes; don't use it as an all-purpose living area.
- ⇒ Stay on a regular schedule of arising and going to bed at the same times each day.
- ⇒ Avoid excessive daytime napping. If you do nap, keep it to 30 minutes or so in the mid-afternoon.
- ⇒ Eat a light supper at least 2 hours before bedtime. Avoid rich, spicy or fatty foods.
- ⇒ Don't drink lots of fluids in the evening.
- ⇒ Don't drink caffeine late in the day, and avoid alcohol. Alcohol may be sedating at first, but it has a rebound effect 3 or 4 hours later. It may also aggravate snoring and sleep apnea.
- ⇒ Get regular exercise like walking 30 minutes a day, preferably in the afternoon.
- ⇒ Be sure your bed is comfortable and provides support.
- ⇒ Keep the room quiet. Turn off the TV and radio. If there are uncontrollable background noises, try ear plugs or use a fan or similar source of soothing sound.
- ⇒ Try a warm bath or shower before bedtime to relax.

(Medical Visits, continued from page 1)

### Bring Your Medications

Miscommunication about medications causes thousands of preventable complications and deaths every year. Even though your medication records are “in the chart”, you should still show your doctor what you are actually taking.

Naturally you should always carry an up-to-date medication list in your wallet or purse. However, discrepancies between lists and label instructions are common. Bring both your list and the bottles to each visit, so there is no confusion. Also make sure to include any non-prescription medications or supplements that you take.