



Home Care Services for Seniors

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www.readyhands.com

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News for Clients and Friends

To Our Clients and Friends...

In this issue we feature the topic of emergency preparedness. It is a timely subject, not only because the potential for severe winter weather exists at this season, but also because of the heightened awareness that natural disasters and terrorist attacks have unfortunately thrust upon us in recent years.

As we at Ready Hands look forward to what we expect will be another exciting year of growth, we also must look back with appreciation for all the wonderful support we have received from present and former clients, elder-care professionals and others in our community. All of us here would like to extend our sincerest wishes to you and your families for the best that the New Year can bring!

*Granger Benson, M.D.
Sue Benson, R.N.*

We Appreciate Your Referrals!

As always, we would like to express our appreciation to those people and organizations who have recommended us during the past three months. We can't always identify a specific person who passed on our name, so if we have left you out, **please** let us know!

ElderCare Strategies; Renaissance Gardens at GreenSpring Village; Inova VNA Home Health; Linda Aufderhaar, MSW; Mrs. Adele Davis; Rev. Gary Charles, Old Presbyterian Meeting House; the law firm of Carter, Fullerton and Hayes; Mr. John Wood; Messiah Lutheran Church; Capital Hospice.

Thank You!

Are *You* Prepared for an Emergency?

Emergency events can occur quickly with little or no warning. Some, like severe winter weather and its attendant risks of utility outages or hazardous road conditions, are fairly common. Others, like chemical or biological attacks, would have seemed unthinkable a few years ago but must now be taken into account. Although anyone can be a victim of severe weather, natural disasters or other types of emergencies, the elderly and people with disabilities are especially vulnerable.

Ready Hands has procedures in place designed to maintain needed services to our most vulnerable clients in an emergency, *if we can*. However, these procedures can only supplement the actions of families and other responsible parties. Therefore, we certainly concur with emergency management experts who strongly advise that all of us develop individual and/or family emergency preparedness plans.

Preparing for emergency events should ideally include all of the following:

- ◆ An emergency kit. (See page two).
- ◆ An escape plan that includes at least two emergency meeting places. One should be right by your home. Designate an alternate site outside the neighborhood.

- ◆ A communications plan. Choose an out-of-town person to call if family members are separated. Be sure everyone has complete phone and email contact information.
- ◆ Information about school and workplace emergency plans.
- ◆ Household and financial preparations to protect your home and possessions.
- ◆ An emergency plan for pets, if applicable.

Of course, planning for emergencies starts with educating ourselves. There are many sources of information about this important topic. Ready Hands suggests contacting one or more of the following:

The Northern Virginia Regional Commission. Ask for or download the publication "Your Guide To Emergency Preparedness." 703-324-3187, www.novaregion.org

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security. 202-282-8010, www.ready.gov

Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management. www.co.fairfax.a.us/oem, 703-324-2362

Assembling an Emergency Kit

A basic preparedness kit for riding out an emergency at home would include at least the following items:

- ◆ Three to five gallons of water per person
- ◆ Three to five days of non-perishable food per person
- ◆ Battery powered radio with extra batteries
- ◆ Flashlight with extra batteries
- ◆ First aid kit
- ◆ Moist towelettes for sanitation
- ◆ Manual can opener
- ◆ Duct tape and plastic sheeting to shelter-in-place
- ◆ Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- ◆ Garbage bags and plastic ties for sanitation
- ◆ Special needs such as prescription medications, incontinence undergarments, protective gloves, etc.
- ◆ A list of important emergency contact numbers

To prepare for the possibility of evacuation, an emergency kit should also include things like:

- ◆ One or two changes of clothes per person
- ◆ Sturdy shoes or work boots
- ◆ Rain gear
- ◆ Hats, gloves, thermal underwear
- ◆ Blankets or sleeping bags

Winsome Williams, C.N.A. Receives Quarterly Recognition Award



At Ready Hands, we are proud of all our employees. Still, every three months we like to recognize one individual who particularly exemplifies the performance and values we regard as important in home care employees. This quarter, our award goes to Winsome Williams (“Winnie”).

Winnie joined Ready Hands in March, 2004. She has worked in the field of home care since 1984. Before that, she worked as a medical office assistant in her native Jamaica.

Besides her experience, one of Winnie’s great characteristics is her observational skill. Winnie keeps in regular touch with our office and faithfully notes and reports any concerning changes in her client’s condition. This attentiveness has averted serious problems more than once.

Another of Winnie’s special attributes is her strong dedication to her clients. For example, when a recent client became ill and needed emergency medical care, Winnie accompanied her to the hospital and worked extra hours—no questions asked. Thanks, Winnie, for being such a great asset to Ready Hands and to your clients.

Virginia Introduces Revised Home Care Licensure Regulations

The Virginia Department of Health has released new home care organization licensure regulations effective January 1, 2006.

According to Virginia statute, an organization providing home care services must be licensed. Home care agencies that are certified or accredited by certain other approved entities may be exempt.

Licensure conveys certain key protections for consumers such as minimum requirements for liability insurance, credentialing standards for employees, criminal background checks and record-keeping requirements. As of this year, a number of important changes will be in effect.

One such change requires the development of a staffing plan to reasonably ensure that clients’ needs are met without interruption. Ready Hands has always had procedures in place for staffing emergencies. They include maintaining some excess capacity in our work force, hiring just ahead of the need and retaining a “Lead C.N.A.” whose function is to fill in on short notice whenever required.

The revised regulations also call for each licensed agency to have an infection control plan. Simple employee procedures like regular hand washing, appropriate use of protective gloves and reporting of illnesses that could be

transmissible to clients can have a big impact. In 2006, Ready Hands will be intensifying our efforts to educate employees on the importance of infection control.

Several other changes have been introduced in the new regulations, all of which are intended to protect consumers. Complying with the regulations is costly and time-consuming, but we regard it as important for our clients. At our most recent state inspection in 2005, an exhaustive day-long audit of all our policies and procedures, Ready Hands was found to be in perfect compliance with no deficiencies.

Consumers should be aware that a great many home care agencies are operating with no state licensure or other accreditation of any kind. Those agencies structured as “registries”, which effectively act as placement services for independent workers, are not subject to licensure requirements. Nor are companies whose workers exclusively provide household or companionship functions—as long as no “hands-on” personal care is being performed.

Consumers can obtain a list of licensed Virginia home care agencies by writing to: Center for Health Care Services and Consumer Protection, Virginia Department of Health, 3600 W. Broad St., Ste. 216, Richmond, VA 23230-4920.