



Home Care Services for Seniors

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www.readyhands.com

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To Our Clients and Friends...

The end of 2006 marked the fourth full year that Ready Hands has been in operation. We continue to be gratified by our growing volume of care each year. In 2006 we saw a 60% increase in service hours over 2005.

One of the challenges we face is the task of recruiting and hiring qualified home care aides. In this issue we report on page one the increasing gulf between the supply and demand for home care workers nationwide, despite evidence reported on page two that disability rates among seniors are actually falling. Also on page two we relate some strategies we use to attract the best employees we can find.

As we enter our fifth year, we would like to express our deep appreciation to all those clients and area elder care professionals who have placed their confidence in us.

Granger Benson, M.D.

Sue Benson, R. N.

We Appreciate Your Referrals!

As always, we would like to thank those people and organizations who have recommended us since our last issue. We can't always identify a specific person who passed on our name, so if we have left you out, **please** let us know!

Capital Hospice; Vanessa Bishop, LCSW-C of Elder Care Consultants Inc.; Care for You, Inc.; Anna Mensah of Access Home Care; Veronica Kelly, LCSW of the Arlington Area Agency on Aging; Jewish Council for the Aging; Erica Dolan, OT; Miriam Houseworth; Michele Smith, Nurse Practitioner; Catholic Charities; Lighthouse Home Care; Linda Aufderhaar, MSW of SeniorCare Associates, Inc.; Renaissance Gardens at Greenspring; Barbara Payne, MSW of ElderCare Strategies, Inc.; Dr. David Leekoff; Sue Franke, MSW and Emma Pyle, MSW of GreenSpring; Mrs. Eldon Lewis

Thank You!

Report: Growing Caregiver Shortage in U.S.

Our country is poorly prepared to meet a coming crisis in caregiving as our population ages. That's the conclusion of a report released this past fall entitled *Caregiving in America*. The report was developed by the Caregiving Project for Older Americans, a collaboration of the International Longevity Center-USA (ILC-USA) and the Schmieding Center for Senior Health and Education (SCSHE).

According to the report, several concurrent demographic and socioeconomic forces are converging to create an inevitable "caregiving crisis" by mid-century. First, the available pool of family caregivers, who are the greatest source of care for impaired older adults, is shrinking. At the same time there is a growing shortage of paid professionals in the caregiving industry. Finally, the number of people over 65 is expected to double to about 70 million by 2030. The most rapid rate of population growth will occur among those 85 and older, the group with the highest intensity of caregiving needs.

These trends point to a growing and alarming disparity between the need for assis-

tance and the availability of paid and unpaid caregivers. According to Dr. Larry Wright, Co-Director of the Caregiving Project for Older Americans and Director of SCSHE, "The material presented in this report clearly outlines the looming national crisis that threatens to undermine the health of millions of aging Americans."

Caregiving in America reports that more than 12 million people in the U.S. currently require some form of long-term care. However, even now, about 20 percent of adults needing assistance are unable to find the voluntary or paid help they need. "If 20 percent of our older population is going without the care they need, imagine what that percent will be as the number of older adults increases," says Dr. Wright.

The report outlines a critical shortage in paid home care workers that is only expected to worsen over coming years. Caregivers' wages are among the lowest in the U.S. In addition, few fringe benefits, difficult working conditions and lack of career development all contribute to the shortage.

Hiring the Best We Can Find

Hiring high caliber nurse aides isn't easy, especially in an environment of growing need and shrinking availability. We occasionally make mistakes, but here's our process for making the best hiring decisions we can.

First, we focus on the key characteristics that make for a successful aide. They include demonstrated reliability, honesty, a cheerful and willing attitude, industriousness and the ability to communicate well in English. We also seek indications that the aide genuinely enjoys caregiving. Certainly training and credentials are important, but at the end of the day it is personal character that matters most.

Second, we try hard to keep a reputation in the nurse aide community as a preferred employer. We therefore get a steady stream of employment inquiries from nurse aides. We never advertise. Most of our aides are referred to us by current or former employees. We treat everyone with courtesy and respect, and we maintain contact with applicants over time in an effort to build relationships with them.

Next, Ready Hands maintains a searchable database of all applicants, drawn from applications and telephone screening interviews. The database now contains nearly 1500 names. It includes basic contact information, credentialing data, days and hours of availability, willingness to work nights, weekends and live-in cases, means of transportation, work experience, special considerations like pet allergies, etc.

All applicants are asked what we call our "values" question: "What do you think it takes to do a good job as a home care aide?" We find that applicants who can readily articulate such factors as compassion, patience, industriousness, punctuality, cheerful attitude, etc. will usually make good employees. Finally, we give each applicant a preliminary rating on a scale of one to three, based on the telephone screening interview.

When we need to hire additional aides, we invite the most qualified and highly rated individuals in for a detailed personal interview. Candidates who perform well in the interview then undergo careful reference checks. We try to obtain these via telephone, not just in writing, so that we can better judge the quality of the reference. The most useful references are previous clients or family members who have had direct experience with the applicant.

Finally Ready Hands offers employment to applicants who "pass" all of the foregoing steps and who have the work availability we are seeking. At that time, they undergo criminal background checking through the Virginia State Police Central Criminal Records Exchange. They then receive their orientation to Ready Hands' standards, policies and procedures before being assigned to a client.

Our process is not absolutely perfect, but we certainly look hard for the best aides available to take care of our valued clients.

Recognition Award Recipients: Emile Lumingu and Patience Addo



Ready Hands is privileged to have so many fine, caring nurse aides working with our clients. It is always hard to single out someone for special recognition, but certainly both Patience Addo and Emile Lumingu are well deserving of our two most recent Quarterly Recognition Awards.



Patience joined Ready Hands in March, 2005. She has an infectiously cheerful, upbeat manner and always exhibits caring and warmth toward her clients. She has a record of reliability beyond reproach and can always be trusted to meet her commitments to Ready Hands and her clients.

Emile has been with us since August, 2005. He is dedicated and enthusiastic in his approach to his work. Beyond this, he is a true gentleman, always dressing and conducting himself in the most professional manner. In addition to working 40 hours per week for Ready Hands, Emile works two other jobs which keep him busy nearly every waking hour! Yet, he never complains and can always be completely relied upon to do what is asked of him.

Thank you, Patience and Emile!

Disability in Elderly Declining

A new analysis of data from the National Long-Term Care Survey (NLTC), published in December, 2006, reveals a continuing and accelerating decline in chronic disability rates among older Americans. According to the study, the prevalence of chronic disability among those 65 and older dropped from 26.5% in 1982 to 19% in 2004/2005.

The analysis also showed that during this same interval:

- ◆ The greatest improvements were seen among the most severely impaired seniors.
- ◆ Those 85 and older experienced greater reductions in disability than seniors in younger age categories.
- ◆ The percentage of Medicare enrollees age 65 and older who lived in long-term care institutions such as nursing homes dropped from 7.5% to 4.0%.
- ◆ The annual rate of decline in disability accelerated from 0.6% in 1984 to 2.2% in 2004/2005.

Researchers say that these improving disability figures could help bolster the Medicare program's fiscal health and lessen the societal impact of the aging of the baby-boom generation.

The NLTC is a periodic federal government survey of 20,000 Medicare enrollees funded jointly by the National Institute on Aging and Duke University.