

### To Our Clients...

Since we have only occasional opportunities to see our clients and families personally, we are inaugurating this little bi-monthly newsletter as another means of keeping in touch with you.

We plan to include various kinds of information that might be of interest or of use to you. Examples would include general information about Ready Hands, tips we've learned that can help us do a better job for clients, short articles on health-related topics and useful home care resources.

We hope you find this newsletter worthwhile, and we welcome your suggestions for topics to include in future issues.

*Sue and Granger Benson*

### Record Folders Help Communication

Communication, communication, communication. There is almost nothing more important to our success in achieving satisfied clients. In recent weeks we have therefore started to place simple client record folders in most homes, especially in situations where a family member or responsible party may not always be present during Home Companion visits.

These are to assist information exchange between you and your Home Companion, and to store important papers relating to a particular client's care.

The record folders are colored folders with pockets in the front and back covers and several sheets of note paper bound in the middle. Feel free to use them to jot

*(continued on back)*

### Medication Errors—The “Other” Drug Problem

As new medications offer better ways of controlling disease, the risk of harm due to drug errors is growing. More complex regimens mean more potential for mistakes.

Seniors are especially vulnerable. Individuals between 65 and 79 receive an average of 20 prescriptions per year. Seniors comprise 13% of the population but account for 34% of all prescriptions.

Drug errors are categorized as overuse, underuse or misuse. Poor communication with and among health providers is a major cause. Discrepancies between what patients are actually taking and what doctors' records indicate occur in 76% of cases, according to one study!

What you can do:

⇒ Be an active participant in all treatment decisions.



- ⇒ Bring *all* pill bottles to *every* physician visit.
- ⇒ Use a pill dispenser.
- ⇒ Keep an up-to-date, accurate list of all your medications handy at all times.
- ⇒ Have a family member present at physician appointments.
- ⇒ If one doctor changes a drug that another prescribed, make sure they have communicated.

## Clients Have Rights

At Ready Hands we're not big fans of fine sounding policy statements and organizational rhetoric, because we're judged not by our operating manual but by our ability to deliver top service. However, we do want you to know that our manual lists client rights that every Home Companion is taught to respect. Here they are:

- ⇒ The right to considerate and respectful service.
- ⇒ The right to choose the individual(s) who provide service in your home.
- ⇒ The right to be informed in advance of any anticipated change in services or availability.
- ⇒ The right to reasonable notice if services must be discontinued because a client's needs can no longer be met safely by Ready Hands.
- ⇒ The right to privacy about health, social and financial status.
- ⇒ The right to confidentiality of records and of approval or refusal of their release to any outside agency except where required by law.
- ⇒ The right to express dissatisfaction without concern about recrimination.
- ⇒ The right to know by name and position the person responsible for supervising the client's services, and how to reach that person at any time.
- ⇒ The right to receive a prompt response from Ready Hands to any request or concern.
- ⇒ The right to be offered only those services which Ready Hands has the resources and capabilities to perform competently.
- ⇒ The right to a complete explanation of charges and rates before service is commenced.

### *Client Folders, continued*

down any instructions or messages for the Home Companion that will help her (or him) do a better job for you or your loved one.

We have asked our Home Companions to use the folders for recording any information they feel might be of value for you to know. They are also a good place to keep things like emergency contact numbers, scheduled appointments and the like.

We want the folders to serve as a practical means of two-way information exchange, not as an official record akin to a patient chart. So, please use them in the ways that work best for you.



## Presentations by Dr. Benson to Local Groups:

Since starting Ready Hands, Dr. Benson has given presentations to several organizations on health topics of interest to seniors. He is happy to speak to any group, regardless of size or composition. There is no stipend,

and no promotional content is included. A list of recent and upcoming engagements is shown below.

11/08/02	Forest Glen at Sully Station
11/13/02	Paul Spring Retirement Community Resident Council
12/18/02	Manchester Lakes Senior Community
1/8/03	Paul Spring Retirement Community Employees
1/21/03	Watergate at Landmark Senior Group
2/2/03	Messiah Lutheran Church Adult Sunday School
2/11/03	Lincolnia Senior Center
2/17/03	Burke 55'ers Senior Group
3/5/03	Salvation Army Home League
4/3/03	Jewish Community Center

## Need Transportation?

For liability and safety reasons, Ready Hands does not transport clients unless we use the client's vehicle with written permission. For some, what we can offer is just not enough. We often then suggest Steve Moore, of "Errand Runner and More."

Mr. Moore offers chauffeur/transport service, general errands, pickup and delivery and a range of other transportation-related services. He is very attuned to the special needs of his clients, many of whom have functional limitations. He assists clients to get from their residences to his comfortable vehicle and escorts them safely indoors upon returning. He will stay with clients during visits.

Mr. Moore has escorted elderly parents to wedding receptions, done every conceivable type of errand and has even served as confidant and support person for numerous appreciative clients.

(As with any outside service or professional we feel can benefit our clients, Ready Hands has no business arrangements with Mr. Moore.)

*Steve Moore can be reached by cell phone at 703-919-1228, or by fax at 703-425-3533.*