

# Ready



# Hands Inc.

Home Care Services for Seniors

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www.readyhands.com

October - December 2005

## News for Clients and Friends

### To Our Clients and Friends...

During the past three months Ready Hands has continued its brisk rate of growth. In fact, each month since May has been a new record in terms of service hours. We continue to be gratified by the confidence and support of eldercare professionals, present and former clients and many others in our community.

In this issue we include two brief articles for caregivers—one listing some tips for managing caregiver burden, and another featuring the excellent Well Spouse Association. Caregivers need help, too! As Well Spouse says, “When one is sick, two need help.”

As the holidays approach, we want to extend our thanks and our very best wishes to all of our clients, families and friends.

*Granger Benson, M.D.*

*Sue Benson, R.N.*

### Vida Oppong Gets Recognition Award

This quarter our award goes to Nurse Aide Vida Oppong. Vida joined Ready Hands in July 2004. She has worked with several clients and families since that time. All have described Vida in the most complimentary possible terms. She is warm, caring and industrious. She exhibits wonderful values, displaying the highest integrity and honesty toward all. She is the kind



of person it is impossible not to like.

Vida has recently completed her training as an LPN and has passed the Virginia Board of Nursing exam. This accomplishment required considerable hard work and sacrifice on her part, and we congratulate her!

Thank you, Vida, for being such a great asset to our company and to our clients!

### Thank You For 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; Inova VNA Home Health; the Old Presbyterian Meeting House; Capital Hospice; Messiah Lutheran Church; Fairfax County Adult Protective Services; Veronica Kelly, RN, LCSW; the Alzheimer's Family Day Center; the Jewish Council for the Aging; Unity of Fairfax; the Well Spouse Association; Lincolnia Senior Center; Virginia Hospital Center Physical Therapy.

### Employee Retention: Keeping The Best

In our last issue we described the process we use at Ready Hands to screen and hire the best home care workers we can find. In this article we'll turn to the next important challenge—keeping those employees who do the best job for our clients.

Home care is a difficult working environment for employees because it's not necessarily a “steady job.” Client needs often change over time. Some clients need only temporary care, such as when convalescing after an acute illness or surgery. Others may require sudden or planned admission to a nursing home or assisted living facility. As a result of these kinds of changes, an aide may find him or herself without an assignment, or unable to accommodate a client's modified schedule.

An aide working fewer hours than he or she needs is obviously under great pressure to generate more income. If Ready Hands cannot satisfy that need quickly, the aide may well be forced to accept work from another agency or private household employer. Recognizing this fact, we try very hard to be a favored em-

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ployer and meet the needs of our personnel if it is humanly possible. Here are some of the ways we do it:

1. Hire just ahead of the need. We never bring on new hires unless we have first exhausted all ways of filling client assignments with existing staff.
2. Try to give employees the work hours they want. An aide who has requested eight hours a day might reluctantly accept an assignment with fewer hours, but with time the arrangement won't work. This is one of the major causes for the high turnover that clients of some home care companies experience.
3. Treat employees kindly and with respect; show appreciation often. Non-monetary factors can greatly influence an employee's loyalty toward Ready Hands.
4. Recognize superior performance. Every three months Ready Hands pays special tribute to an employee whose work was particularly outstanding. The employee receives a gift basket, certificate, a monetary gift and public recognition.
5. Let employees share in Ready Hands' success. Each quarter we distribute a portion of profits to employees as a bonus check. For the quarter ended September 30, 2005, all employees received a bonus equal to 10% of their gross pay during the period.

## Well Spouse: A Wonderful Resource for Spousal Caregivers

When one is sick, two need help. This is the important truth underlying the mission of an excellent organization that serves the needs of spousal caregivers. It is called Well Spouse Association. As the association's website says, "Illness and accident attack without warning and can happen to anyone. No two people are living in the same situation and no two illnesses exact the same toll. Alzheimer's is different from MS, heart disease is different from Parkinson's, stroke is different from accident. But all well spouses face similar problems of anger, guilt, fear, isolation, grief, and financial threat whether they are full-time caregivers or whether their partners have only moderately disabling illnesses."

Well Spouse is non-profit membership organization which gives support to wives, husbands, and partners of the chronically ill and/or disabled. Membership offers several benefits, including: a subscription to the organization's monthly newsletter, Mainstay; participation in a Well Spouse support group; discount pricing on Well Spouse publications, as well as regional and national conferences. Well Spouse also offers an online chat forum where spousal caregivers can share experiences and learn from others facing similar situations.

Well Spouse support groups, which meet monthly, permit members to share their thoughts and feelings openly

## Don't Ignore Signs of Caregiver Burden

The term "caregiver burden" refers to the personal toll of providing care to a loved one with illness or disability. It may take the form of emotional stress, worry, depression or anxiety, or financial hardship. It can have significant physical manifestations, even increasing mortality risk.

Caregiver burden is highest among those who face the greatest demands. But the absence of active coping and management strategies is another key factor. Adopting such strategies can reduce the negative impact on one's personal well-being. Here are some important examples:

- ◆ Learn as much as possible about your loved one's condition and its effects on him or her.
- ◆ Protect personal time for activities that you enjoy or are important to you.
- ◆ Exercise, get adequate sleep and eat a balanced diet.
- ◆ Watch for symptoms of depression like persistent sadness, lack of interest or pleasure, excessive fatigue or insomnia. Contact a physician if you experience these.
- ◆ Use your network of friends and family for support, or join a support group.
- ◆ Get help! Ask family members, friends and neighbors to pitch in. Arrange for respite care or employ a home care company if needed. Contact one of the many excellent caregiver support organizations.

with others who face similar circumstances in an accepting, welcoming setting. They also provide a great opportunity for participants to obtain practical information on a range of issues facing spousal caregivers. Well Spouse support groups exist in many areas of the country, including an active group in Northern Virginia.

To learn more about this wonderful organization, call 1-800-838-0879, or log onto the association's website at <http://www.wellspouse.org>.

### Irene Dadzie Assumes Lead C.N.A. Role

We are pleased to announce an important new addition to our team. She is nurse aide Irene Dadzie, who serves as our Lead C.N.A. In this capacity, she helps us "fill in the gaps" in our schedule, so that clients aren't left without help if a regularly assigned aide has an emergency absence.

Clients are often apprehensive about having someone new fill in for their usual aide. These concerns evaporate quickly after a few minutes of seeing Irene at work. She is industrious, faultlessly courteous, cheerful and competent. Welcome, Irene!

