

# Area Agency on Aging *Connections*

## Dom Care providers open their homes to those in need of care

By Daniel Casciato  
For Pittsburgh Senior News

Having raised 10 children of her own, Edith McCallum of Wilkinsburg can be considered an expert at providing care. And with 40 grandchildren and nine great grandchildren, she has plenty of love to share, as well.

So when Edith was asked eight years ago to become a domiciliary care provider to care for two mentally challenged men, she accepted them with open arms. The two men, ages 52 and 48, have now become entrenched into the lives of the McCallum family. "My children, grandchildren and great grandchildren have taken them in like they're longtime members of the family," said Edith. "We just treat them like normal people."

While Edith enjoys her work and would recommend it to others, she cautions that it's a challenging job. "You definitely need the patience for it," she said. "But I really enjoy doing it. God made them for a reason and to be able to make an impact on their lives just makes me happy."

Roseanne Kwait, Dom Care supervisor for the Allegheny County Department of Human Services Area Agency on Aging (ACAAA) said that they are always looking for providers who would be interested in taking care of others, such as seniors who are now in nursing homes but who would like to return to a community setting. "There are many people in Allegheny County who can't live alone, or whose families are unable to care for them anymore and can benefit from someone who can care for them and also provide companionship," she said.

Individuals in need of the care may be elderly or have physical or mental challenges that prevent them from living alone. Dom Care provides a warm, caring

home filled with love, support and encouragement.

The program was created in June 1978 by the state to provide a homelike living arrangement in the community for adults ages 18 and older who need assistance with activities of daily living and are unable to live independently. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Aging website, Dom Care homes are smaller than traditional personal care homes in that home providers care for no more than three Dom Care residents. They are inspected annually to ensure that they meet health and safety standards. If the home and provider passes this inspection, they become certified. The 2006 Dom Care payment rate for an individual is \$849.80.

Betty Glass, a senior living in East Liberty, is a certified Dom Care provider who currently takes care of three people ages 25, 38 and 39. She's been a Dom Care provider since 1994. "What I enjoy most about what I do is seeing how far they have progressed from the time they moved in here," said Betty. "They all had low self-esteem and were totally dependent on others when I met each of them. Over time, I helped them become more independent and got them to socialize more. They now go to church with me on a weekly basis. They go shopping and bowling and do plenty of other activities. They're much happier now and it's a joy to see how far they've come."

Rosanne said that residents in the Dom Care program can receive supervision with self-help skills such as personal hygiene and grooming, are given three meals a day, and receive housekeeping and laundry services. If the resident takes medication, the provider makes sure they get the correct dosage. "They receive 24-hour care from our providers," she said.

Dom Care residents who have limited income may also be

eligible for a state supplement towards the cost of Dom Care and a personal needs allowance. Residents receive on-going care management and monitoring, and involvement with outside activities is strongly encouraged.

Anyone can become a Dom Care provider, according to Roseanne. "We're looking for people who are willing to open their homes to those who need some care and support," she said.

ACAAA is responsible for certifying Dom Care homes in Allegheny County. Dom Care home provider applicants go through a certification process to ensure that certain health and safety requirements and home regulations are met.

Some of the health and safety requirements include:

- Be at least 21 years of age
- Own or rent your home or apartment

• Live in the certified home with the consumer

- Hold current certification for both CPR and first aid
- Have criminal history clearances

Dom Care residents enter into a contract to pay the home provider on a monthly basis for the entirety of the Dom Care residential service. The Pennsylvania Department of Aging is responsible for determining the monthly dollar amount the resident pays the provider.

Betty has one piece of advice to those who would like to become a Dom Care provider. "Make sure you give the people you are caring for time to get adjusted," she said. "Once they do, you'll see them excel."

For more information about Dom Care, call SeniorLine at (412) 350-5460. *PSN*

### Energy, utilities and aging roundtable event

The Pennsylvania Energy, Utilities and Aging Consortium and the Allegheny County Department of Human Services/Area Agency on Aging invite senior consumers and anyone working or living with seniors to the Allegheny County energy, utilities and aging consortium roundtable event to be held from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. September 13 at the Seton Center, 1900 Pioneer Ave., Dormont. Registration and breakfast will begin promptly at 9 a.m.

This event is free and open to the public. Continental breakfast, lunch and informational material will be provided.

Attend these roundtables and learn about:

- Reducing utility bills and conservations tips;
- Services and programs for older consumers;
- Manage your finances;
- Senior fitness; and
- Resources and other issues of interest.

Visit [www.county.allegheny.pa.us/dhs/aaa](http://www.county.allegheny.pa.us/dhs/aaa) for more information. *PSN*

