

Seniors Matter

Oct 2015

In the 1990's Sharon Kendall of Rock Hall found herself with seven great aunts who were becoming frail, with no children nearby to help them out. "There was no 'in-between' care available when someone didn't need a nursing home but needed help with daily living," she said. So 16 years ago she and her husband designed and opened Golden Rule, an Assisted Living facility in Rock Hall, licensed for eight residents. The feel inside is homey, and the yard is bursting with colorful flowers and foliage. It is a home.

Bonnie Tucker, a registered nurse, opened Rock of Ages, another eight-bed facility in Rock Hall, almost five years ago. "It was something I wanted to do," she said. Rock of Ages is set in a quiet, woodsy area and, like most others, has round-the-clock staff, group meals, and private rooms for residents.

There are seven such facilities in Kent County, All are small, and some cater to Veterans only. Many of the residents live there throughout the end of their lives. If and when they need hospice care, it can be provided there.

For the vast majority of us, these homes are out of sight and out of mind. But those providing this service are my unsung heroes and heroines. Caregiving takes patience, stamina, and devotion. It is hard and skilled work.

Unfortunately, costs for Assisted Living care are not covered by Medicare. Residents for the most part pay privately by the month or use benefits provided under a long-term care insurance policy.

October is Residents Rights Month, when long-term care facilities are asked to focus on the dignity, respect, and value of each resident. "There are many residents who have no one to visit them. People are afraid and isolated, with no socialization. Ombudsmen are a blessing, but we need more blessings," said Delores Kelley, a Maryland State Senator and long-time advocate for aging services. She recently participated in a group of advocates for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. The program is required by federal law to protect the rights and promote the well-being of all residents in long-term care.

Under the program both paid professionals and volunteers visit nursing homes and assisted living facilities to investigate complaints, educate providers about residents' rights, and promote community involvement in long-term care facilities. Volunteers for Kent County are now being recruited. For further information, call Upper Shore Aging at 410-778-6000.

- The non-profit organization Justice in Aging had issued a new online guide called “Twenty Common Nursing Home Problems and How to Resolve Them.” Advocates for those in long-term care should be familiar with practices legally required in nursing homes. The guide is available at www.justiceinaging.org
- Chestertown Walk to End Alzheimers - Saturday, Oct. 10, at Wilmer Park. Individuals and teams welcome. For more information, call 410-778-5581
- Upper Shore Aging, Inc., 200 Schauber Rd., provides free help with Medicare questions. Open enrollment season for Part D is Oct. 15-Dec. 7, 2015. Call Krystal herring, Senior Health Insurance Program coordinator, for an appointment- 410-778-2564.