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# Coastal Companion Care Communicator

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## CCC Answers Call For More Services

Mike Ramsey, CCC Director of Operations/Manager, has been on the go since assuming ownership of Coastal Companion Care in Fall 2011. One day he was overheard saying: “I’ve been so busy today, I passed myself twice.”

Since Mike joined CCC, the number of companion care service hours has grown by 40 percent, necessitating the hiring of more caregivers to meet the demand.

Mike explains that the most challenging part of his job is making an effective match of caregiver and care receiver.

When hiring new caregivers, Mike looks for a values match: “I look for people with a religious background. If they have faith and belief, they are able to deal with things better.”

Other important qualifications are: experience in caring for elderly people, either in a work setting or in a family situation; integrity; a positive attitude; and ability to multitask. “Our caregivers are more than companions. They cook, clean house, and take a person shopping, to doctors’ appointments, exercise classes, restaurants....”

CCC now employs more than sixty caregivers. Mike states that there is pressure that goes along with the job, but “It’s a different kind of pressure. I love it!”



Directors Sandy Cagle and Mike Ramsey plan caregiver schedules.

## In-home Care Critical as Population in Southeastern North Carolina Ages

The way of the future is to help older people remain in their own homes as long as they are capable. This is particularly true along the Southeastern North Carolina coast with its large numbers of retirees.

North Carolina parallels the United States with 13 percent of its population over 65 years old.

In Brunswick County, however, the over-65 group leaps to 21.4 percent.

There will be an increasing need for a variety of services for older adults. Ted Goins, president of Lutheran Services Carolinas which operates a nonprofit nursing home in Wilmington, states: “A lot of people have no business being in an institution because they can live at home.”

Officials from the state Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services predict that the needs of older people in areas of Southeastern North Carolina will far overshadow the supply of services.

The *Star News* reports that a key part of preparing for this trend “is to ensure that healthy, able seniors are allowed to remain in their own homes as long as it’s medically sound for them to do so.”

Goins further notes that people want to stay in their own homes; almost all prefer living at home to an institutional setting. “As long as we can find ways to safely help them do that, it’s a happier place for everybody,” concludes Goins. (Excerpted from *Star News*, 4/8/13).

## FINANCE & CONSUMER RESOURCES

### Alzheimer's Is Costliest Disease

The RAND Corporation, a non-profit research organization, reports that Alzheimer's is the most expensive disease in the U.S., costing \$157 to \$215 billion a year.

The largest cost associated with Alzheimer's and other types of dementia is the care that's needed simply to help mentally impaired people with daily life.

RAND estimates that around 4.1 million Americans have dementia, less than the 5.2 million people estimated by the Alzheimer's Association.

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia and the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S., trailing deaths from cancer and heart disease.

Dementia is rapidly growing in prevalence as the population ages. Current treatments only ease the disease temporarily.

*(By Marilyn Marchtone, Associated Press, as printed in Star News, 4/4/13)*

### Did You Know?

Purell was developed by a family-owned business that lost money on the product for ten years. In 2002 the Center for Disease Control declared that alcohol-based products kill germs more effectively than hand washing.

Each day one hundred million people worldwide use Purell.  
*(CBS Sunday Morning, 4/14/13)*



### Protect Deceased From Identity Theft

Every year thieves steal the identities of nearly 2.5 million Americans to open credit card accounts, apply for loans, and secure services. Nearly 800,000 deceased people, about 2,200 daily, are deliberately targeted.

Crooks steal personal information from hospitals, funeral homes, or obituaries. With a name, address and birth date, thieves can purchase a deceased person's social security number through the internet. In 2011, the IRS paid \$5.2 billion in tax refunds to criminals who filed tax returns for deceased individuals.

There are protective steps families can take.

- In obituaries, list the age but do not include birth date, mother's maiden name, or other personal identifiers.
- Send copies of the death certificate (certified mail, "return receipt") to each credit-reporting bureau to place a "deceased alert" on the credit report. Also mail certificates to banks, insurers, brokerages and credit card and mortgage companies where the deceased held accounts.
- Report the death to Social Security, 800-772-1213.
- Call Department of Motor Vehicles to cancel driver's license.

- A few weeks later, check the credit report of the deceased (annualcreditreport.com) for any suspicious activity. Several months later request another free report.
- For more information, visit [www.idtheftcenter.org](http://www.idtheftcenter.org). Type the word "deceased" in the search box. (AARP Bulletin, March 2013)

### Caregiving Labor Shortage Hits U.S.

Taking care of older people is one of the nation's fastest growing occupations, and the labor shortage is worsening.

As retirements loom in the workforce, nursing homes and in-home care agencies are already struggling to find enough workers to provide direct care.

*The Wall Street Journal* lists reasons for the shortage: "pay is low, typically less than \$12 an hour, injury rates are high, and the work can be unpleasant and physically draining."

An employment website reported that for 2012, advertised nursing home aide jobs were up 120% from 2011. Serving older people in 2020 will require five million direct care workers, a 48% increase from 2010.

The rate of occupational injury, usually from back or muscle strains, is higher than construction and factory workers. Only sports team and firefighting injuries are higher than injuries in nursing facilities.

Many nursing home aides say they are required to look after more patients than they can safely handle. These job factors lead to higher turnover, costing an estimated \$6.3 billion a year in long-term health care. *(Excerpted from The Wall Street Journal. 4/15/13.)*





## SENIOR HEALTH & LIFESTYLES

### Medication Alert: Be Aware

AARP reports an increase in ER visits and hospitalizations due to medication misuse. Incorrect doses of medication can lead to memory or coordination issues.

Be on the watch for three main warning signs:

- Accidental abuse – taking the wrong amount or forgetting a dose.
- Prescription interactions if more than one medication is being used or more than one doctor is prescribing; always check with the doctor or the pharmacist.
- Intentional misuse -- when someone takes the wrong medication on purpose or mixes medication with alcohol or illicit drugs.

#### Things to Know

If you receive a new prescription,

ask these questions: is there a generic that will help save you money; when and how often often should you take the medication; should you take it with or without food; are there any known interactions; what should you do if you forget to take a dose or take too much; what are possible side effects; when you should start feeling better; when to stop taking the medication; how to store the medication; and where you can find more information.

AARP also notes the importance of being realistic about how much relief pain medications can offer. About 20 to 30 percent reduction in pain from is standard. It is not wise to escalate the doses to ease pain.

Pills with the opioids oxycodone and hydrocodone pose

risks: addiction or overdose; increase in the risk of falls; increased sensitivity to pain. Some leading pain clinics now focus on getting people off pills.

Complementary approaches such as yoga, massage, meditation, biofeedback and acupuncture may help.

### Shake it Off!

Each day most Americans consume more than twice the recommended daily sodium limit of 2,300 milligrams – the amount in just one teaspoon of table salt.

The British Medical Journal reported that limiting sodium intake reduced cardiovascular risk by 25 to 30 percent.

There are five ways to help you cut sodium from your diet.

**Don't add salt to boiling water.** If you must salt a dish, do so at the end of cooking when its impact will be greater.

**Use sea salt.** Although sea salt contains as much sodium as table salt, the larger crystals and unique flavors can result in less usage.

**Use fresh ingredients.** Make your own sauces and soups.

**Use convenience foods wisely.** Opt for frozen rather than canned. Rinse food before using to get rid of some salt.

**Look for low-sodium products.** Any food with a "reduced sodium" label may have as much sodium as a regular version of another brand. A label that says "low sodium" means the product can't have more than 140 milligrams of sodium per 100 grams (By Brierley Wright, M.S., R.D. Excerpts from STARNEWS, 1/27/13)





## SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

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Suzy Velasco goes the extra mile to put “care” into caregiving. Whether fulfilling routine tasks or jumping out of bed at 2 a.m. for an emergency visit, her dedication never waivers. Her patience is steadfast. Suzy explains: “You have to put yourself in their place. How do I want to be treated?”

Caregiving and helping others has always been characteristic of Suzy. Born in Fayetteville but a resident of California for thirty years, Suzy was a nanny in both Los Angeles and the Bay Area before she got married. As a new mother in Fresno, Suzy cared for her newborn son and two nieces, ages 2 and 4, for a couple of years.

She volunteered 11 years at a pregnancy care center, served as a volunteer peer counselor,

presented at women’s shelters and became a Girl Scout leader for her daughter’s troop.

About three years ago, Suzy moved to Southport. She has always loved North Carolina. Having spent 25 years visiting her grandmother whose family goes several generations back in Brunswick County, Suzy feels connected to this part of the country: “This has always felt like home.”

Suzy left California, but she did not leave caregiving. She was hired as a caregiver with Coastal Companion Care in November 2011.

Several aspects of her work appeal to Suzy who earned a bachelor degree in liberal studies from Fresno State with the end goal of teaching special education.

Early in her teaching, she realized she prefers one-on-one work. She now applies her

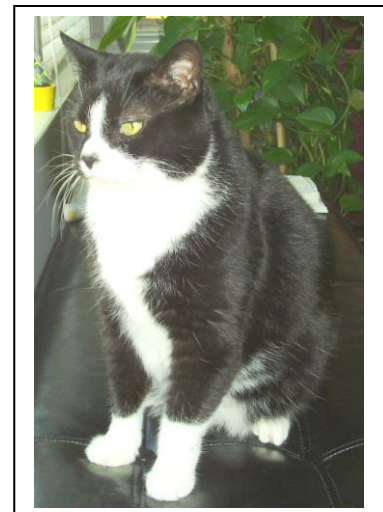
teaching talents to caregiving by helping people figure out ways to navigate their own homes safely.

One of her delights is working on a 5-member team to assist Mrs. Irene Cannon, partly because Mrs. Cannon is a peer of Suzy’s maternal grandmother and shares much of her grandmother’s history in Brunswick County. Suzy marvels at the support Mrs. Cannon receives from her family, living in an apartment that adjoins the house of her daughter, Vesta Williams. “It’s ideal,” Suzy says. “They’ve gone above and beyond to give her her own space and to include her as part of the family.”

In her “spare” time, Suzy also helps care for her grandmother and attends Brunswick Community College to earn her RN. After the degree Suzy has her eye on hospice work: “It is a privilege to be with somebody at the end of her life.”



Caregiver Suzy Velasco (left) enjoys the company of Mrs. Irene Cannon (middle) and Vesta Williams, Mrs. Cannon’s youngest of five children.



“J” the cat also offers companionship.