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Coastal Companion Care Communicator

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See newsletter insert to read more about Co-Founder Joie Mahler's spiritual journey.



Mike Ramsey Joins Leadership Team

As 2011 came to a close, Mike Ramsey assumed leadership at Coastal Companion Care as director of operations/manager.

Mike was led to Coastal Companion Care through a "chance" meeting with Hal and Joie Mahler, agency founders. "Things fell into place," Mike stated, noting that his work with Coastal "...is like a ministry, not only for our clients and their families, but for our caregivers. It's helping people."

Mike administers the office and oversees personnel functions, community relations and marketing. Prior to joining Coastal Companion Care, Mike worked in the home health care field and in the pharmaceutical industry, serving most recently as marketing manager for Allied Home Health.

The Beginning: Vision, Passion, Prayer

"People were a little leery. It's very personal work. We had to gain trust." So stated Joie Mahler, co-founder with her husband Hal of Coastal Companion Care (CCC). In 2004, Joie and Hal left rewarding careers near Raleigh and relocated to Brunswick County where no in-home companion services existed. Their combination of skills – Joie's 25 years in nursing and education

and Hal's 20-plus years as senior buyer for medical software systems – produced quality services for seniors and their families.

Six people were in the first caregiver orientation class. The first person to be served by CCC was referred by Doshier Hospital. "We really had to educate this community. People didn't know what companion care was," Joie reminisced. The co-founders presented to churches, civic groups, senior groups, doctors, hospitals, and other service providers. "There was a need, and no one was providing services."

As a child, Joie saw her grandmother live the last ten years of her life in a "rest home." When working as an in-home nurse, Joie witnessed the benefits of seniors living in their own homes. With her brother and a team of caregivers, Joie helped her mother live the last ten years of her life at home even though her mother had vascular Alzheimer's.

(continued on page 3)

In this issue

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Mike Ramsey Joins Leadership Team | 1 |
| • The Beginning: Vision, Passion, Prayer | 1 |
| • Taking Away the Car Keys | 2 |
| • Senior Population in Brunswick County | 2 |
| • Tips for Surviving the Heat | 2 |
| • The Need for Coastal Companion Care Grows | 2 |
| • Driving Miss Daisy – When to Take the Car Keys | 2 |
| • Finance and Consumer Resources | 3 |
| • Nurses You Can Count on | 3 |
| • Spotlight on Caregivers | 3 |



SENIOR HEALTH & LIFESTYLES

Tips for Surviving the Heat

When caring for your older loved ones, keep your cool.

People aged 65 years or older are less likely to sense and respond to changes in temperature. Closely monitor people who depend on you for their care and follow these guidelines:

- Stay in air-conditioned buildings as much as possible.
- Do not rely on a fan as the primary cooling device during an extreme heat event.
- Drink more water than usual and **don't wait** until you're thirsty to drink.
- Don't use the stove or oven to cook—it will make your house hotter.
- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.

• Take cool showers or baths to cool down.

- Check the local news for health and safety updates.
- Seek medical care immediately if having symptoms of heat-related illness like muscle cramps, headaches, nausea, vomiting.

(Visiting Angels website, www.v-angels.com originally posted 9/5/06)

Driving Miss Daisy

Driving safely is less likely once old age impairs a person's vision, hearing and/or reaction time or once diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia compromise memory, judgment and understanding. Taking away car keys is a decision that children and/or spouses ultimately face. Watch for the following warning signs of unsafe driving to help you know when the car keys must go.

- * Brakes, accelerates or make abrupt lane changes
- * Reacts slowly to changes in driving environment
- * Has close calls or more fender benders than usual
- * Fails to use turn signal or keeps signal on without changing lanes
- * Drifts into other lanes
- * Drives on the wrong side of the road or in the shoulder
- * Appears fearful of driving or excessively tired after driving
- * Has trouble reading signs or navigating directions; gets lost more than usual
- * Notices irritation and honking of other drivers but seems oblivious to their frustrations
- * Fails to pay attention to signs, signals or pedestrians
- * Misses exits or backs up after missing exit
- * Experiences physical difficulty or range of motion issues (looking over the shoulder, moving hands or feet, etc.)

Visiting Angels website, www.v-angels.com, originally posted 9/5/06)

The Need for Coastal Companion Care Grows

Coastal Companion Care is committed to addressing the growing need to care for our older citizens. Below are the growth projections of adults 65 and over who live in Brunswick County. These projections underscore the important role of in-home care. Coastal Companion Care is proud to provide quality care in your home; peace of mind in your family.

- By 2030 the number of adults 65 years and over will have grown by 149% as opposed to the 80% growth rate statewide.
- The population segment of adults who are 65 and over will grow to around 18% of the total population statewide and will exceed 30% of the total population in Brunswick County.
- In 2009, persons younger than five years were 5.5% of Brunswick County, a little less than the state average.
- In 2009, persons younger than 18 years were 18.5% of Brunswick County, less than the state average.
- In 2009, citizens 65 years and older were 20.6% of Brunswick County, nearly double the statewide average
- North Carolina 2.3 million baby boomers (born 1946 to 1964) are beginning to enter retirement age.

(From "Seniors Growth Puts Demand on Services," State Port Pilot, 2-9-11, as abstracted from a report from the NC Study Commission on Aging)

Home Health Aides Make a Difference

In 2002, Im Ja Choi, age 63, learned from doctors that nothing more could be done for her 85-year-old mother who was battling stomach cancer and weighed only 62 pounds. A nursing home was out of the question because the older woman spoke no English and did not eat American food. Ms. Choi, a former financial executive, cared for her mother at home for seven months until she found a Korean-speaking home health aide.

Finding a home health aide for her mother prompted Im Ja Choi to start Pennsylvania's first small business providing Korean-speaking home health aides to the Penn Asian Senior Services trains and provides aides who speak eight languages.

"Asian people need more

FINANCE & CONSUMER RESOURCES



information to navigate the health care system," Ms. Choi said. "I have a master's degree, and it was hard enough for me to wait in line at Social Security, go home and call them back two days later, then be put on hold. If you don't have the language, you give up."

Nearly two years ago, her mother died at age 93. "No one expected she would live more than 100 days," said Ms. Choi, who is now caring for her 91-year-old mother-in-law with an aide's help.

(From New York Times – Business/retirement section, 3-15-12)

The Beginning

(continued from page 1)

These experiences shaped Joie's belief that life for older people could be more satisfying in their own homes.

With this vision in action, CCC services spread to hundreds of families.

In serving older people and their families, Joie stated that CCC also provides meaningful work for in-home caregivers: "It's so much more than a job. It's God-given work. You know clients get excellent care because our caregivers are so satisfied."

At the end of 2011, Joie and Hal Mahler began transitioning CCC leadership to Mike Ramsey and Sandy Kriksciun. The Mahler's decision to move back to the central northern part of the state was "based in prayer," said Joie. "God closes doors and opens doors."

Joie is employed in the Read-Aloud Program to help middle school students stay in school. Hal is completing his Six Sigma training program in business management through Villanova University.

Nurses You Can Count On -- 70 Years Combined Experience

Sometimes behind the scenes and sometimes not, Agency Director Sandy Kriksciun, RN, orchestrates delivery of Coastal Companion Care services to over 50 families and individuals. When Sandy came to Coastal Companion Care five years ago, less than 20 families were receiving services. A healthcare professional with 30 years of nursing and supervisory/management experience, Sandy K. has served in direct care, supervisory and administrative positions in nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, home health care agencies, and in private care.

Known as an astute problem-solver able to troubleshoot and prioritize, Sandy K. adds a soft-spoken sensitivity to her job tasks: in-home assessments, caregiver matching, scheduling, quality control and compliance, back-up for in-home companions. She is pivotal in all agency services, yet quick to give credit to others: "I couldn't do this without the team. The staff is very dedicated and willing to make things work when needs and schedules change." One team member that Sandy K. relies on is another Sandy.

Sandy Cash, RN, joined Coastal Companion Care in 2011 as a service supervisor to help oversee services of in-home aides. With more than 40 years in health care employment, Sandy C.'s primary former positions included continuous care supervisor, quality improvement specialist, and case manager. Sandy C. helps with the employment and performance of in-home aides, the critical frontline deliverers of service. The caregiving team relies on Sandy C.'s experience, energy and enthusiasm to better serve families.



SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

PAGE 4

Caregivers with Coastal Companion Care come in all shapes, sizes, and colors, and with an impressive array of talents, skills and qualifications.

And they all come for the same reason – to make a difference in the lives of older people and their families. One aide who has been with Coastal going on four years was most gratified in her long-term service to one family: “The whole journey allowed me to respect the aging process along with the fulfillment and gratitude I feel every day to know ‘papa’ died at home peacefully.”

Coastal Companion Care employs over 40 in-home aides that provide care to 57 individuals and their families. Aides’ skills are as diverse as the needs of those served.

The longest serving aide at Coastal has been with the company almost seven years. Five aides were hired in early 2012 to meet the growing demand for services.

The average profile of an aide tends to be a female in her 50’s who has been with Coastal almost four years. She has attended college. Fourteen aides have advanced degrees in fields such as education, social work, and pastoral counseling. Before employment at Coastal Companion Care, the typical aide worked an average of 14 years in her longest-held jobs in one of the

following settings: business, public schools, real estate, nursing, higher education, non-profit service, hospice, pastoral care, government service, and various jobs serving the public.

The rewards of caregiving are many:

“...getting to know the patient as a person and allowing her to still be the person she is.”

“They give me more than I give them. I receive a blessing from each visit.”

“To see seniors given the best care possible and to treat them with the dignity they deserve.”

“I feel like I’ve helped someone and made a difference by being there.”



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