

Older folks get help from LIFE

Program allows people to continue living at home

BY ALLISON SCHUCHART
THE RECORD HERALD

No one wants to think about losing independence in their golden years.

Some people who otherwise would need nursing home care are benefiting from the Living Independence For the Elderly program.

Living LIFE

Melanie Furlong, director of community relations at LIFE Lutheran Services Inc. in Chambersburg, said there are three qualifications people must meet in order to take advantage of the facility's services.

Individuals must be 55 years of age or older, live in the service area and be eligible for a nursing home.

To be eligible for a nursing home, a person must be unable to independently perform at least three activities of daily living such as cooking, bathing or getting dressed.

The service area includes Waynesboro, Quincy, Mont Alto, Shady Grove, Zullinger, Greencastle, Williamson, Fayetteville, Chambersburg, Scotland, Marion, Shippensburg, Orrstown, Pleasant Hall and St. Thomas.

"So many people think this is adult day care, but it's not," Furlong noted.

Services offered include medical care, rehabilitation, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

"We have an interdisciplinary team," she explained.

The team includes bus drivers who transport participants each day, home care nurses that assist people who attend with getting ready each morning and a doctor who becomes the primary care physician for those who go to LIFE.

Also on staff are a social worker who coordinates other social serv-



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A board in the hallway at LIFE Lutheran Services Inc. on Fifth Avenue in Chambersburg helps Norman Starliper of Roxbury with his sense of touch.

ices and an activities director responsible for planning activities that stimulate the mind, assist with physical strength and improve hand-eye coordination.

The interdisciplinary team meets each morning to discuss the health of LIFE participants and to make note of any changes. There are about 20 people currently in the program.

"Because we manage their health ... they're going to be healthier, they're going to be stable, they're going to be less strain on society and they're going to have a better quality of life," Furlong explained.

LIFE's Fifth Avenue center includes quiet rooms, a library, therapy tub with a lift and jets, shower, patio, laundry room and rehabilitation rooms.

People physically unable to do so at home can shower or bathe at the facility and participants can bring in their laundry if they cannot wash it at home.

Emergency assistance is available on weekends.

Lutheran Social Services received a grant for the LIFE facility in 2007 and it opened last October.

LIFE is paid for by Medicaid and people who have Medicare pay a monthly fee. It is offered free of charge to individuals who are cov-

ered by both medical programs.

Dave Patterson of Waynesboro said he knows the quality of the LIFE program.

"It's really something that people in Waynesboro should know is around," he said. "I have the greatest praise for that place."

Dave's wife, Arlene, began going to the facility at the beginning of the year and typically attends LIFE three times per week.

He noted that she currently participates in the program five days a week for added assistance with rehabilitation after a recent fall.

"It gives me peace of mind to know that she is well taken care of," he said. "I'm free of worry ... that she will be taken care of regardless of what happens to me. They go out of their way to help her and they keep me informed."

LIFE offers Arlene the opportunity to get out of the house, he added.

"It gave her something to do other than sit in front of the television," he said. "I can't say enough for them."

The Pattersons, who are both lifelong residents of Waynesboro, attend the Church of the Apostles United Church of Christ.

Getting life back

Paul Newcomer started attending LIFE at the beginning of January.

"When I came here, I couldn't walk," he noted. "I was here four weeks and I was walking — not real good, but I was walking."

The Chambersburg man said he can't begin to explain what his experiences at the facility have meant to him.

"It gave me my life back," he said.

Newcomer attends LIFE five days a week and had big praise for the people who work there.

"I'd come seven days if they were open," he laughed. "It's the caregivers that make this institution what it is. This is my home away from home that keeps me home."

For more information on LIFE, call 264-5433 or visit:

www.lifelutheranservices.org

Changes help in their homes

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Dr. Angela Hisson, academic fieldwork coordinator for the occupational therapy assistant program at Penn State Mont Alto, said there are a number of changes that can be made in the home to help people as they age in place:

- Use better lighting — more lights and brighter bulbs.

- Change handles to entrance doors and on kitchen cabinets. Sometimes the addition of large knobs to cabinets can be all the help that is needed.

- Fix doors that stick to limit stress on joints and energy expended when trying to open them.

- Install handrails at stairs and inclines to decrease the possibility of a fall.

- Place benches near entrances to the home.

- Install raised toilet seats and grab bars in the bathrooms.

For more tips and information about aging in place, visit:

www.naic.org

www.aarp.org/families/home_design

www.homemods.org/pages/safety-assess.shtml