

Living Well Senior Solutions – A Valuable Resource By Peggy Slade-Sowers, Director

We learned at this year's Refresh Your Soul Conference that being an effective caregiver means caring for yourself as well as your parent, spouse or partner. As families, spouses and partners begin to tackle challenges experienced with aging loved ones, an Aging Life Care™ Manager through Living Well Senior Solutions will provide coaching, guidance, support, and assistance with positive decision making for the caregiver, which in turn reduces stress and burnout.

During an initial assessment the Care Manager will focus on the needs and challenges of the client as well as the challenges faced by the caregiver. Mary and David are a wonderful example of the partnership formed between the client, spouse, family and Care Manager. David was experiencing advanced dementia symptoms, and Mary, a retired music teacher, was extremely committed to her husband and doing an excellent job of providing activities to keep David engaged. However, personal care, daily household tasks, and exhaustion from 24-hour responsibility were taking a toll.

Based on their in-person assessment, a plan was presented to Mary and the family which initially recommended:

- Care Manager to coordinate medical appointments, update medical information, and improve communication
- Therapy/Personal Training for exercise Wellness Class for strength and endurance
- Change to a pharmacy with prepackaged medications to increase accuracy
- Update Power of Attorney/Living Will/Estate Plan reflecting new situation
- Delegate bill paying/financial oversight to either designated family member or bill paying service
- Provide companionship for David so Mary could attend caregiver support groups
- Hire a caregiver on a trial basis for 4 hours twice a week to assist with bathing, laundry and light cleaning.

Perhaps most importantly, Mary knew that she had her Care Manager for a listening ear, an objective opinion and moral support. The Care Manager was able to present better and more efficient ways of providing care for David, reducing Mary's stress even more. The family was comforted knowing that important changes were being communicated to them by a trusted advocate providing additional support when making difficult decisions.

Over the years things have changed, and Mary now lives alone. She continues to travel, takes piano lessons, works with a personal trainer, attends the theater, and visits museums routinely. Having a Care Manager providing long range planning and looking out for Mary's welfare, as well as her husband's, has enabled Mary to pursue her interests and stay engaged. The family stated, "Peggy is a good communicator and has a gently assertive nature which enables her to get things done that we would not be able to. She has become a loving part of our family providing perspective and resources needed to support my mother during a difficult time."

It is both comforting and critical to have a resource upon which you can rely. From the initial contact by Living Well Senior Solutions with a family or potential client, our focus is to work together to formulate a plan that maximizes an elder's ability to live a life with purpose, choice and freedom.

For more information or a free phone screening consultation, contact Peggy at (513) 312-7083 or pslade-sowders@erslife.org.