

St. Charles at Home Program Provides Valuable Service to Senior Citizens

The St. Charles at Home Program is designed to deliver a broad range of supportive services to help senior citizens maintain their independence and remain at home. This program offers both peace of mind and continuity of care. Families can be assured that their loved one is well cared for by dedicated professionals in the comfort of his or her own home.

Margie Volpenhein, Director of Social Service, is in charge of the St. Charles at Home Program. She also serves as the Community Resource Counselor at St. Charles Care Center.

"The program is based upon a social model instead of a medical model because we're not sending nurses out to homes," said Volpenhein. "Our companions are bonded employees who undergo background checks to insure that you receive professional care by a dedicated staff."

These companions provide the following services: meal preparation, transportation, homemaking, laundry services, medication reminders, companionship, shopping, scheduling appointments, bathing, grooming and dressing.

Volpenhein can also arrange for the following services: emergency response system, adult day programs, referral services, nursing services, physical, occupational and speech therapies.

"We started by offering a community service that gave anyone in the community an opportunity to call us and ask medical questions," said Volpenhein. "We answered questions about doctors, Medicare, Medicaid and other health care matters. That's when we began to realize how much people want to stay in their homes."

Volpenhein visits homes to assess the medical situation of the senior citizen. She is a licensed social worker and checks for safety, physical and mental status, and the level of the person's needs. If the person needs an at home caregiver for housekeeping, meals and transportation, Volpenhein arranges that service through the St. Charles at Home Program. If the senior citizen can benefit from physical therapy, she can send in a home health therapist that is covered by Medicare.

There are times when the person being visited needs to be moved from the home in order to receive

proper medical attention. Volpenhein will talk to the senior citizen and his or her relatives about the different options available.

"The whole purpose is to set up services so that the person can stay at home, or provide other options if the person needs more assistance," said Volpenhein. "We develop a Care Plan and coordinate services for the person to meet short and long term needs. I continue to monitor service needs and am available to the person and his or her family as a resource counselor."



Margie Volpenhein

"Our companions go through background checks and drug screening," said Volpenhein. "We are small at this time but we're hoping that a lot of people take advantage of our care a few times a week. We have a great working group and service all of Greater Cincinnati. Our companions are very loving and compassionate."

The St. Charles at Home Program is private pay and is not covered by Medicare, but a number of long-term care insurance policies cover companion services. The cost for a weekday visit is \$17 an hour.

"Our cost is comparable to other agency fees but the perk is me," said Volpenhein. "When you call, you're talking to a licensed social worker, and I will be the one making the home visit and the assessment for you or your loved one. Often, people call about our care center, and that's when they find out that we have the at home program."

"The main reason St. Charles started the at home program is because we are so mission driven," continued Volpenhein. "Society is changing. People want to stay in their homes as long as possible. We're doing all we can to help them stay home and get quality care."

A number of people who started out in the St. Charles at Home Program have moved on to the St. Charles Village (independent living, fix own meals), the St. Charles Lodge (independent living with meals provided), and the St. Charles Care Center (nursing home).

Volpenhein is available Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to answer questions by phone or as part of a scheduled visit to the St. Charles campus. She can offer advice on services in the home, levels of care, nursing home placement, Medicare and Medicaid. Her phone number is 331-3224, extension 166. The St. Charles Care Center website is www.stcharlescare.org.