



Mercy Care for the Adirondacks

A Mission of the Sisters of Mercy

*Easing Isolation
and Loneliness of
Elders Living Independently*

Newsletter • Spring 2009

Making a Difference: Touching Elders with Mercy

Paul Reiss, Chairman of the Board of Mercy Care for the Adirondacks, led a discussion at the March 19 Board meeting acknowledging the community's amazing response to Mercy Care's mission to enhance in every dimension the fullness of life of elders and their caregivers living in the community independently.

Over 40 caring people in the Tri-Lakes have become Mercy Care Friendship Volunteers and are assisting elders in Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, Tupper Lake, and surrounding areas. They have contributed more than 1200 hours of service to their neighbors. And five volunteer Mercy Care faith community nurses representing three different faith-communities are active in Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake.

Sr. Catherine Cummings, Director of Mercy Care's Friendship Volunteer and Faith-Community Nurse Programs, recounted some examples of *Friendship* that Mercy Care Volunteers are giving:

- Providing transportation to a woman who no longer drives and wishes to visit her husband, a resident at AMC Uihlein
- Friendly visits with a resident at Saranac Village at Will Rogers
- Regular transportation to an elder woman, who lives alone and does not drive, to bi-monthly lab and physician appointments
- Accompanying a 90-year old woman to weekly hair appointments
- Reminiscing over photo albums and mementos with a woman who lives alone
- Listening to story telling about the amazing accomplishments of her loved one who suffers from dementia
- Teaching an elder to use a computer
- Providing spiritual care and communion to a home-bound woman
- Outings for a walk and ice cream
- Accompanying an elder man to physical therapy

In her own words, Idona Jermano, a family member of an elder served by a Mercy Care Friendship Volunteer in Tupper Lake, shared her experience with new volunteers during their

training class.

"Since my 92-year old mother came to live with my husband and me several months ago, and I became aware of Mercy Care's service, it has been comforting to know that I am not alone and help is available.

Until April of last year when she became ill, my mother lived independently in an apartment. She had a good friend that lived next door to her. I had the peace of mind that she was never alone when I couldn't be there. After my mother came to live with us, her good friend died the following month. My mother not only gave up a great deal of her independence but lost her closest companion. It was a hard transition for all of us, especially for mom.

My mom has a good sense of humor, loves to read, and play cards. A former seamstress, now unable to use her sewing machine due to her failing eyesight, mom continues to sew by hand.

My biggest concern about having mom live with us, especially now that her mobility is becoming more limited, is making sure she is able to socialize with others. Before becoming ill mom drove her girlfriends around town, went out to lunch, shopped for herself and attended weekly mass. She has always been a social person, and I feel it is important to nurture that. This is where Mercy Care's service plays such an important role.

Your volunteer brings warm companionship, talk of family and old times. She plays cards with mom and joins her for lunch from time to time. Mom looks forward each week to her Mercy Care volunteer. And my husband and I are able to get out and do our errands together while she is there. Mom says "the time flies by, and we don't even realize it." I want you all to know what a special role you play in the lives of elders and their families. My story is only one of many. All of your volunteers should feel proud of what they give. Your service is truly a God send. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

***...it has been
comforting to know
that I am not alone***

Touching the Adirondacks with Mercy

New Mercy Care Friendship Volunteers Serving Elders in the Tri-Lakes

The new Friendship Volunteers trained in Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake join eight volunteers trained in Saranac Lake in October 2007, nine volunteers trained in Tupper Lake in March 2008, and 13 volunteers trained in Lake Placid in May 2008.



On March 18, five new Friendship Volunteers were commissioned in Tupper Lake. (L to R) Margo Cooper, Mary Hockey, Gloria Hare, Leisa Almekinder, and Joseph Szwed.



Mercy Care for the Adirondacks commissioned six new Friendship Volunteers on October 15, 2008 in Saranac Lake: (L to R) Sr. Paula Richard, Dr. Alfio Romano, June Vrooman, Laura Duncan, Elizabeth Kochar, and Sr. Carol Kraeger (missing from photo).

Training Program Leadership

Sr. Catherine Cummings, RSM, Ed.D., R.N., directs Mercy Care's Friendship Volunteer and Parish Nurse Programs. Sr. Catherine is qualified as a Parish Nurse Educator. Friendship Volunteers complete 10 hours of training consisting of Physical Fitness for Older Adults, Community Resources, Spiritual Care, Conflict Resolution, the Elder and the Family Perspective, among others. Training is provided by the Sisters of Mercy, elders' family members, Mercy Care board and staff, physical therapist, nurses, other elder agency staff, the Director of the Essex County office for the Aging and the Director of NY Connects/CARES Franklin County.



Mercy Care's services are offered in cooperation with churches and congregations of all faiths, and with families, community organizations, healthcare providers and agencies serving elders.

Parish Nurses Active in Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake

Patrician Beneshan, Patricia Loud, and Susan Seacord are serving as Mercy Care Volunteer Faith Community Nurses (Parish Nurses) at St. Agnes Catholic Church in Lake Placid. Joyce Long is a Faith Community Nurse with Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Saranac Lake, and Janice Connors serves as a Faith Community Nurse at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Tupper Lake.



*Mercy Care Faith Community Nurses in Tri-Lakes
L to R: Patricia Loud, Patricia Beneshan, Janice Connors,
Susan Seacord (Joyce Long missing from photo)*

The concept of parish nursing was new to the Tri-Lakes area when the Mercy Care Faith Community Nurses began their work in 2008. At St. Agnes Church in Lake Placid, a meeting was held with the Pastor and the Parish Council to discuss the Parish Nurse Ministry and obtain the important support of the Council members. An area in the church basement was set-up for use by the nurses and in November an initial Blood Pressure Screening Clinic was held during the time between Sunday Masses. A second clinic was held during the Breakfast Buffet that was put on by the Confirmation class on March 15. The clinics are a service that the nurses would like to provide on a fairly regular basis. They would like to be able to include their “sister parish” of St. Brendan’s Church in Keene. The current plan is for a series of short informational items to be published in the bulletin to re-introduce Parish Nursing. A survey will be developed to determine the most important needs of the two parishes in health care that address body, mind and spirit.

Janice Connors, Faith Community Nurse at St.



*Parish Nurse Pat Beneshan with G. Winifred Lamb at
St. Agnes Blood Pressure Clinic*

Thomas Episcopal Church in Tupper Lake, works collaboratively with Fr. Bill Cooper, Pastor. Janice explained to new Mercy Care volunteers that Faith Community Nursing is being there for a person on their spiritual journey. She shared examples of the roles a Faith Community Nurse can pursue:

- Health educator—providing health information in bulletins; acknowledge that through bible study there is a place for health in terms of spiritual and emotional care.
- Referral agent—a parishoner can call Janice for information about services in the community to address health concerns
- Health counselor—Janice can provide “one on one” conversations with parishoners about health concerns and help them identify their goals
- Facilitator—A Faith Community Nurse might start a support group within a congregation or refer people to existing groups or she/he might accompany a person to a support group

Janice has held blood pressure clinics at St. Thomas, a healing ministry meets every Sunday after Church for prayer time, nutrition considerations are taken into account for their weekly luncheon following Church service, and a health bulletin board has been developed and posted in the Church.

These wonderful volunteer Parish Nurses promote health and spiritual healing and serve as health educators, health counselors, and spiritual caregivers. They do not perform direct or hands-on health care and do not duplicate other nursing or medical services in the community. If you feel you might benefit from talking with a Parish Nurse about an upcoming medical procedure, an illness from which you are recovering, or a health concern you have, please call Mercy Care’s office at 518-523-5580.

New Volunteer Parish Nurses Invited to Join Training Class

Parish Nurse Training classes will be held beginning on April 18 and will continue on April 25, May 2, and May 9 in Lake Placid. Parish nurses are required to complete 34 contact hours of training. If you are interested in becoming a Volunteer Parish Nurse, please contact Sheila Schneck for registration information at 523-5583 or send her an e-mail to sschneck@adkmercy.org (Mercy Care provides training at no cost to volunteers.)

Volunteer Opportunities Fair

On May 7 from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Mercy Care and Saranac Village at Will Rogers will co-host a Volunteer Opportunities Fair for Older Adults at Will Rogers. The public is invited and welcome. Come and explore volunteer opportunities, have some dessert, and see how you can contribute to the needs of people in our Tri-Lakes Communities.

If you are an organization looking for volunteers and you would like to set up a free informational table at the event, please call Jamie Whidden at 891-7117.

An article entitled ***The Retirement Project—Perspectives on Productive Aging*** by the Urban Institute, highlights:

- Numerous studies document that active and engaged older people remain in better health.
- Other studies find older adults who volunteer live longer and with better physical and mental health than counterparts who do not volunteer.
- One study showed that productive activities like volunteering and work can lower the risk of mortality as much as fitness activities can.
- More than 6 out of 10 adults age 55 and older engage in some volunteer activity.
- Engagement, whether through volunteer opportunities or work, enhances the health and well-being of older adults and creates societal value.

Transformative Aging A Spiritual Model of Aging for Older Adults”



Educational Forum at Paul Smith's College

Building on the success of two previous educational forums on the topics of “*Creativity and Aging*” and “*Communities for All Ages*”, Mercy Care for the Adirondacks developed an educational forum on October 22, 2008 on the topic of “*Transformative Aging*” presented by Sr. Ann Billard, OLM, Ph.D. Nearly 80 people from throughout Essex, Clinton, and Franklin Counties attended the forum hosted by Paul Smith’s College.

Sr. Ann is a Sister of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy, a pastoral counselor, and a certified Grief Recovery specialist. She has presented workshops on spirituality and aging throughout the United States, Canada, and Australia.



Sr. Ann Billard, OLM, Ph.D.

Helpful tips were offered to assist those working with older adults as well as those seeking a way to grow older more gracefully. Following the presentation, small group discussions among participants were held to explore.



Small group discussion at Transformative Aging Educational Forum

- The relationship between spirituality and positive aging
- Re-framing the cognitive and cultural beliefs about aging
- Finding meaning and purpose in retirement and reclaiming the wonder and delight in life

Sr. Ann discussed the **TRANSCENDENT ELDER**:

- T** thinks positively; trusts connectedness to self, others, and God.
- R** reverences life in self and others; regulates emotions.
- A** accepts life as has been lived; accepts death as part of life.
- N** nurtures the child within; nourishes the body, mind, and spirit.
- S** surrenders to here and now; shares his/her story.
- C** chooses to live fully; cultivates a sense of humor.
- E** expresses self in creative ways; enjoys the pace of one's life.
- N** nurtures compassion; notices the Divine.
- D** dances with other elders; discovers new talents.
- E** encourages others to laugh, love, change; extends help to those younger.
- N** notices the inner elder in self; nurtures the inner elder in others.
- T** transcends regrets, losses, pain of the past.

- E** explores new ideas; enjoys solitude.
- L** lives creatively; listens with empathy; lets go of anger.
- D** detects the gifts from the journey; desires the goodness of the day.
- E** exercises the mind; engages in prayer.
- R** ritualizes the journey; responds with love.



Mercy Care Promotes Elder-Friendly Communities

Mercy Care's educational forum programs are part of its work dedicated to promoting elder-friendly communities and an enhanced quality of life for older adults living in our Adirondack communities.

On June 24, Mercy Care will present an educational forum at Paul Smith's College on "***Aging in Place/Livable Communities.***" Susan Hunter, Ph.D., affiliated with the IDEA (Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access) Center, State University of New York at Buffalo, will discuss how ***Aging in Place in Livable Communities*** is a broad advocacy perspective that guides the way communities confront and plan for the needs of aging residents. There is no fee to attend the forum but pre-registration is required. If you wish to attend, please call Sheila Schneck at 523-5583 or send her e-mail at sschneck@adkmercy.org

Mercy Care Community Council Established

The Board of Directors of Mercy Care for the Adirondacks has established the Mercy Care Community Council to serve in an advisory capacity to the Board and Staff on carrying out its work to promote elder-friendly communities and to provide elders, on a non-denominational basis, with companionship, friendship, and spiritual care. The Community Council is guided by the mission and values of Mercy Care for the Adirondacks.

Mercy Care welcomes and thanks its new Council members for their dedication to elders living in our communities: **Patty Bashaw**, Essex County Director of the Office for the Aging; **Jim Brophy**, Volunteer; **Fr. Bill Cooper**, Pastor, St. Thomas Episcopal Church; **Wayne Johnston**, owner Ruthie's Run; **Patricia Marcone**, retired nurse; and **Jamie Whidden**, Director, Saranac Village at Will Rogers. Jamie Whidden was elected as Chairman of the Mercy Care Community Council at its January 27 meeting. Please contact Mercy Care Board, Staff, or Council members if you know of an elder who might benefit from Mercy Care's services or to share an idea about how to improve the quality of life for elders in the Tri-Lakes.

Tupper Lake Friendship Volunteers



L to R: Fr. Bill Cooper, Pastor, St. Thomas Episcopal Church; Frank Lescinsky, Lake Placid/Saranac Lake Volunteer Coordinator; Patty Francisco; Natalie Clark; Kathleen McPhillips, Tupper Lake Volunteer Coordinator; Cecile Jarvis; Lorraine LaValley; Jerry Hayes, Mercy Care Board Member; Bruce VanVranken; Donna Beal, Mercy Care Executive Director; Ben Peets, Mercy Care Board Member. (missing from photo: Bruce Dana, Sr. Barbara McCarthy, Cindy Platt, and Janice Connors, Faith Community Nurse)

Because Mercy Care's office is located in Lake Placid, we make a special effort to reach out to our Tupper Lake Volunteers. Mercy Care hosted its Tupper Lake Friendship Volunteers at a luncheon at St. Thomas Episcopal Church on Tuesday, January 20.

Jerry Hayes and Ben Peets, Mercy Care Board Members, thanked volunteers for their extraordinary service to extend friendship and spiritual care to older adults. They noted that volunteers provide a helping hand to elders, serve as their advocates, and help them stay connected to their community.

The luncheon program included a discussion among volunteers, led by Kathleen McPhillips and Frank Lescinsky, on the topic of *Transformative Aging*, as a follow up to the educational forum that Mercy Care held at Paul Smith's College in October.

Community Support Deeply Appreciated

The Board of Directors thanks the many individuals who responded to Mercy Care's Christmas Appeal and the generous foundations/agencies that made new grants to Mercy Care since September 1 including:

- Adirondack Community Trust
- The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc.
- The McCutcheon Foundation
- New York State Office for the Aging, with special thanks to Senator Betty Little
- The Glenn and Carol Pearsall Adirondack Foundation
- Jacob L. Reiss Foundation
- Sisters of Mercy Ministry Fund



Mercy Care is blessed to have faithful friends in our community who through friendship, companionship, health counseling, education and also advocacy, support our work to care for elders living independently.

Beyond annual support, a convenient way to establish a lasting legacy is to consider including Mercy Care for the Adirondacks, Inc. in your will or other long-range estate plans. By doing so, you will be joining our Circle of Mercy.

If you wish to receive more information about the Circle of Mercy, please contact Donna Beal, Executive Director, at 518-523-5581 or by e-mail at dbeal@adkmercy.org.



Mercy Care Presents at Statewide Conference

On November 12, Donna Beal, Mercy Care's Executive Director, presented a workshop at a statewide conference entitled *Empowering Communities for Successful Aging*. The conference was sponsored by the New York State Office for the Aging, the New York Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, and AARP. Donna presented

on the topic of *Relieving Isolation and Loneliness of Rural Elders: Helping Rural Elders Stay Connected to Their Communities*. Nearly 500 people from throughout the state attended the conference. Proceedings from the conference web site can be found at empoweringnycommunities.org

Mercy Care for the Adirondacks is a mission sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy to provide elders, on a non-denominational basis, with companionship, friendship, and spiritual care. Mercy Care serves elders of all faiths living in their own homes in the Tri-Lakes region of the Adirondacks. Its work is carried out through a Friendship Volunteer Program, a Faith-Community Nurse Program, and an Education and Advocacy Program.

Mercy Care Leadership

Mercy Care is governed by a local board of directors and has a three-person staff. Its sole member is the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Mid-Atlantic Community.



L to R front row: Barbara Rottier, Penny Dieffenbach, Sr. Catherine McGroarty, Sr. Camillus O'Keefe, Vice-Chairman, Sr. Carolyn Madden; L to R back row: John Flanzer, Jeremiah Hayes, Sr. Patricia Vetrano*, Bill O'Reilly, Ben Peets, Dr. Paul Reiss, Chairman, Donna Beal, Executive Director, Sr. Catherine Cummings, Director of Friendship Volunteer & Faith-Community-Nurse Programs, Sr. Honora Nicholson,* Sr. Denise Wilke, and Frank Lescinsky. Missing: Dr. C. Francis Varga and Sheila Schneck, Executive Assistant.*

** Sisters of Mercy representing the Mid-Atlantic Community Leadership Team.*

To make a donation on-line, visit www.adkmercy.org and click on Donate Now.

Staff

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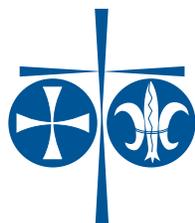
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FRANK LESCINSKY, Lake Placid/Saranac Lake Volunteer Coordinator
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