

Chance for family respite

For some elders, there is day care

By MARGARET MILLER

Every day before she goes to work for the Internal Revenue Service, Mary Kolis of Redford Township makes a stop at University Convalescent & Nursing Center in Livonia.

There she leaves her elderly grandmother, Ella Kolis, who spends the day participating a bit in the center staff's craft program and otherwise resting and sitting. She receives her meals and special attentions, and her granddaughter picks her up at the end of the working day.

"This has been going on five days a week since July of 1972.

"I used to have a full-time home sitter," said Mrs. Kolis, who has been in charge of her grandmother for more than a decade. "But this is much better. The quality of care is much superior and I know it will be there — I don't have to worry about sitters quitting or not showing up for reasons like bad weather.

"Without help like this I would not be able to work."

MARY KOLIS is not alone in her enthusiasm over adult day care, a service offered by University and at least two other area homes that are affiliated with Health Savings Services of Southfield.

These are Dorvin Convalescent & Nursing Center, also located in Livonia, and Henry Convalescent Center of Plymouth. The Health Saving Services organization also includes Dearborn Heights Convalescent Center and Allen Park Convalescent Center.

Lena Gorsuch, 85, is an occasional visitor to University Center, and her daughter-in-law, Dona Gene Gorsuch of Detroit, has found that being able to take her there makes a tremendous difference in her own life.

"I have an 8-year-old son who attends St. Paul Lutheran School nearby and I want to attend programs there," she said.

"Then there is my own mother, who requires my help some days, and there are times when I just need to get away to shop or be with friends.

"If I did not have the peace of mind that comes with knowing she's getting good care on a temporary basis, I couldn't do any of these things."

For Carol Navarre, whose family recently moved from Plymouth to Whitmore Lake, day care at the Henry center means a place to leave her husband's 82-year-old father when the family goes away for a few days.

"At that age, you can't really leave someone alone," she said, "and this gives us more freedom and a little breather. He likes it there, too. It's a really worthwhile service for those who need it."

THE DAY CARE service is an important part of what Health Savings Services considers a much-needed new image for nursing homes.

Marilyn Shifferd, executive director of the organization that seeks up upgrade care and service



Marilyn Shifferd, executive director of Health Savings Services, wants to see convalescent centers more a part of community life. She thinks programs like day care can help.

and thus image, wants to see well-run convalescent homes take their place as community centers for the elderly and their families.

"Convalescent centers have services available that could be used more by the elderly in the community," she said. "For instance, in our group of homes we have hairdressers and aides who can give tub baths or give other special personal care help.

"Also there are the craft classes and movies and other special events that could be enjoyed by visitors there for a day as well as by the regular residents.

"It seems to us these centers could be considered the next step for elderly people no longer able to get to senior citizen organizations on their own but still appreciative of the chance for sociability and entertainment opportunities.

"And then, when the elderly person reaches the stage where full-time care is needed, he or she is already acquainted with the center and feels at home there."

There is an increasing need for care of this type, Mrs. Shifferd said, because hospitals are more and more under pressure to discharge patients not in

need of the sophisticated services associated with acute illness.

"But often families are really not equipped to care for a person who needs a great deal of care," she added. "I've seen families destroyed by situations like this — they want to be so kind but often they wind up doing what is not good for the elderly person."

THE BASIC AIM of Health Saving Services, she said, is to insure in the centers under its jurisdiction the quality of care that will make people consider the convalescent home a viable way to go when there is someone who needs more attention than busy families can give.

"We have regular reviews and meet weekly to resolve problems," said Mrs. Shifferd, whose nursing background fits well into her present responsibilities.

"Whatever needs to be done, we do at all five centers. Everyone has the same information, and we have a meeting of minds as to where we're going."

The dedication to good care and needed services like the day care program can be found in many levels in affiliates of HSS, according to Mrs. Shifferd.

She mentioned the Spiro family, including Alexander, administrator of University Center, Rose, in a similar position at Dorvin, and daughters Martha Cavell and Judy Scranton, both involved in the management of the centers.

But she also pointed to Ruby Matson, who has been at University 17 years and now heads the kitchen there, Ivey Walker, for nine years director of arts and crafts, and many aides who have seen long service.

IT IS PARTICULARLY the over-and-beyond help of aides in the Dorvin center that has pleased Madonna Campbell, a Southfield resident who takes her mother there about three times a week.

Bessie Brown had a stroke on her 89th birthday two years ago, her daughter said, "and since then I haven't been able to leave her alone."

But since she works as a travel agent it is necessary to have help in caring for Mrs. Brown, and she feels the regular visits to Dorvin are most beneficial.

"The aides are just so nice to these people," she said. "One night when I went back to get her I found she wanted to watch for me but they still were trying to get her to eat a little more dinner. So there she was, sitting in the front reception room at one of the beautiful tables there."

"That's the kind of extra service you don't really expect."

Mrs. Campbell realizes the time may come when she will have to leave her mother in a home full-time.

"But for now I don't want to do that," she added. "Being able to take her there for day care helps me a great deal, and I think she's getting something out of it too."

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