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As Allegheny County continues to be home to one of the nation's largest senior populations, the DHS Area Agency on Aging remains focused on supporting our seniors with programs and services that address all areas of their lives, from improving their overall health to protecting them from abuse and neglect.

Critical within that spectrum of services is addressing their individual residency needs. For many healthy older adults, taking advantage of the offerings of a nearby senior community center while living in their own homes suits their needs. For others, whose health might limit their mobility, living at home with some intermittent supports is ideal.

And for seniors who are unable to live independently due to physical or mental frailty, there are several residence options. Domiciliary Care (Dom Care) is one of growing popularity.

Rose and Linda have shared a Dom Care home for nearly four years. Their stories illustrate the advantages of living in a private home as a "family."

For more information about being a provider or resident of Dom Care, please visit the DHS Dom Care webpage. [www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/adultfoster.aspx](http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/adultfoster.aspx)

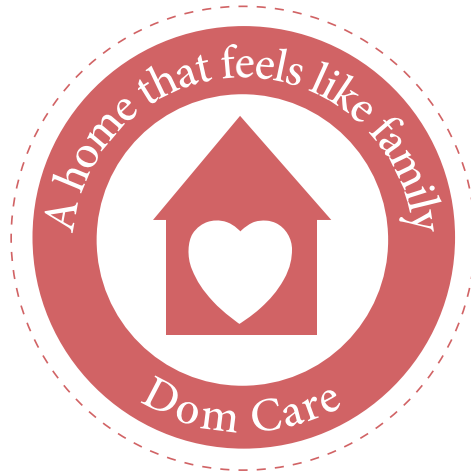


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**Linda's Story** Working around the clock is nothing new to Linda. For seven years, she provided full-time resource coordination/intensive case management services for clients of a local DHS-contracted provider. She supplemented her income by spending many nights and weekends as an on-call mobile crisis worker, going to personal care homes, nursing homes, hospitals and private homes to assist those in mental health emergencies.

It was during this time that she imagined opening a Dom Care home of her own. To her, round-the-clock attentiveness had become second nature, but she longed to be her own boss and to offer more personalized attention to fewer individuals. One of her clients, Rose, told her if she ever did have her own Dom Care home, she wanted to be her first resident. In 2007 she was.

Linda has shared her home and life with two older adult women ever since. Rose has been with her from the start. Others, as is sometimes the case with round-the-clock care, have come and gone. No matter how long they stay, though, Linda is pleased to be able to offer the one-on-one time that living in a Dom Care home affords.

"I am with them day in and day out," Linda said. "I notice when they are sleeping too much, eating too much or not getting enough exercise. I encourage healthful and positive living. It's great to see them feeling healthier."

Linda relates the story of a past resident, Jane, who came into her home with active diabetes, requiring insulin injections to keep it in check. After a year in Linda's care, with her careful monitoring of diet and exercise, Jane was able to control her disease and no longer needed medication.

“It’s a bit of a challenge getting everyone ready and in the car, but it’s worth it,” Linda said about the outings she and her residents go on. “We go to the beach, for day trips and to different cultural locations in Pittsburgh. We come home at the end of our adventure, tired but happy.”

While there are no formal reports that need to be filled out on a daily basis, Linda’s home is subjected to various inspections throughout the year. The provider’s DHS Area Agency on Aging (AAA) care manager visits the home at least twice a year to verify that the facility is being operated safely and that it meets certification requirements. The consumer’s AAA care manager also visits the residence twice annually to assess the participant’s functioning, review the care plan with the resident and provider and ensure that the living arrangement remains appropriate and satisfactory for the participant and provider.

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Care managers also visit as needed or requested by the resident or provider, and two additional visits with the residents may happen at an off-site location if the resident takes part in any center or program activities. These are in addition to annual visits from the Allegheny County Health Department and the AAA ombudsman.

Linda receives monetary compensation for the services she provides to Rose and her other residents, but the payment goes well beyond that.

“The real reward is seeing them happier and doing well, to the best of their ability,” Linda said. “Knowing that they appreciate the improvements in themselves, that’s the real reward.”

**Rose’s Story** Rose wakes every morning, thankful that her life has brought her to live in a home with Linda.

Rose, now nearly 60 years of age, spent most of her adult life living with more than 10 other residents in one of many personal care homes. She was never truly satisfied then.

Rose received community behavioral health services, but she spent nearly all of her time at the residence because, as she recounts, “they only gave us \$60 a month in spending money and they never took us anywhere.”

She admits spending the bulk of the funds for cigarettes. “There really wasn’t much left after that.” Four years ago Linda, who was her Intensive Case Manager at the time, made a suggestion that would change both their lives dramatically. Linda explained the Dom Care program and her role as a provider to Rose.

Rose was thrilled to learn that she could live with Linda, a trained and dedicated caregiver who would be available 24 hours a day. She was also thrilled that her personal spending money would increase and that she would share the home with no more than two other Dom Care residents.

Ready for a change, Rose was referred to the Dom Care program soon thereafter. She hasn’t looked back. Rose credits Linda and the Dom Care program for many improvements in her life.

Rose has broken her addiction to cigarettes, and now budgets for summer vacations at the beach and other fun locations.

“Everyone needs to get away for a couple days,” Rose said.

Rose has also lost considerable weight thanks to the nutritionally balanced menu that Linda prepares and the support she receives to eat healthful foods.

Rose now feels comfortable using public transportation to go shopping or go to her day program center.

“It’s very convenient,” Rose said. “I only need to walk a couple blocks when I get off the bus. And, Linda always takes me to my doctor’s appointments, and sometimes we go to church. If there’s a good movie playing, we may go to the show. It’s very good here. I don’t go without. Everything’s real nice here.”

