



**ELDERHEALTH**  
N O R T H W E S T

800 Jefferson Street, Suite 620  
Seattle, WA 98104

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## ELDERHEALTH AT HOME

**E**lderHealth at Home is our newest program, offering non-medical home care throughout King County. Besides companionship (pictured), home care workers help with housework, laundry, shopping, meal preparation, medication reminders and more.

This growing program now has 35 home care workers with an array of language capabilities, including: English, Spanish, Tagalog, Oromo, Swahili, Somali, Amharic and Tigrinia.

ElderHealth at Home is part of an interdisciplinary team model that emphasizes creative problem solving and enhanced support to allow clients to remain independent and living at home. Funding sources include private pay and COPES/MPC. For more information, contact Sean Walsh at (206) 224-3752.



*Dens Williams and Abrehet Kidane survey the chess board.*



# ELDERHEALTH

N O R T H W E S T

SPRING 2007

## For Your Calendar

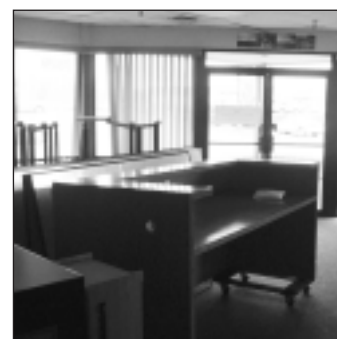
Thursday, May 3, 2007  
7:30 to 8:45 am

**BREAKFAST  
AT THE BALLPARK**

fundraiser with  
**Dan Wilson & Nancy Hooyman**  
SAFECO Field, First Base Terrace  
Info/RSVP: (206) 224-3772 or  
daveb@elderhealth.org

## SOUTH KING COUNTY ADULT DAY HEALTH CENTER IS MOVING

After a decade of operation on the campus of Valley Medical Center in Renton, ElderHealth Northwest's largest adult day health center program is moving about a mile southwest to the northern edge of Kent. The center will be located at 7829 S. 180th St (not far from IKEA). The renovation will be complete as early as this summer.



*The building above will undergo renovation to become an ElderHealth adult day health center housing wonderful programs like the ones below.*

Valley Medical Center provided a terrific home for ElderHealth, but the growth in size of our program and the expansion of VMC makes this move in the best interest of both organizations.



South King County's growing population and changing demographics have led to the growth of our Renton adult day health program, which now serves about 450 people a year. Our new center will be about 30% larger than our current one and it will be configured in a way that will help our adult day health program operate more smoothly.



Many people in the community still refer to this adult day health program by its informal name "Connection," which dates back more than 11 years to a time before it became part of ElderHealth.

When completed, ElderHealth will continue to serve individuals with chronic and terminal illnesses who wish to remain living with their families and out of institutions. We will also continue our special "Get Active Program," an afternoon program designed for adults with developmental disabilities.



# The Last Time I saw Mary

BY NORA GIBSON,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This is a follow-up article to *I Can't Tell you How Much I Love Living ... Where?* from the Summer 2005 newsletter, archived at [www.elderhealth.org](http://www.elderhealth.org).

**M**y mother-in-law passed away in January of this year. She was close to her 91st birthday. I got to know her some years before when she and her husband were still living in their home on Staten Island, New York.



Photo by: Lani O'Conner  
& Kristina Goudey

Mary moved into a nursing home on Staten Island not too long after her husband died. I was overwhelmed by the enormity of the facility (596 beds) and the hallways filled with frail people. The elevators are so overloaded that you have to be extremely persistent to get to activities or plan for half an hour in transit. Despite all of these drawbacks, Mary did OK there in the beginning.

She was a wonderful social creature who enjoyed innumerable encounters with all kinds of people throughout her life. In her mid 80s she and her husband

went on a trip to New Orleans with my husband, Bob. As part of a package deal they got free drinks at the Voodoo Lounge in the French Quarter. If you've spent time in New Orleans you can imagine the type of people who show up for "Happy Hour" at the Voodoo Lounge. Mary made her way in and sat down next to some elaborately tattooed and pierced patrons and struck up a conversation. By the third night they were saving a spot for Mary at the table and welcoming her with open arms.

In the nursing home, she made new friends in the dayroom. She and a group of women laid claim to a table where a clear social hierarchy developed around cognitive functioning. Most of the women sitting at the table could carry on a conversation and Mary still had great social graces, even though her memory skills had significantly declined. Whenever we visited we spent many hours in that dayroom, usually bringing in cheesecake (Mary's favorite food) to share with everyone there. I still regret that I didn't sneak some cheesecake to one of the women who really wanted a taste. The nurse told me not to because this woman was a diabetic and that she would bring her some sugar free cookies. Of course the cookies never came.

Over time Mary's social skills declined and she no longer found her way to the dayroom, instead spending her time in the hallway just outside her room, propped up in a wheelchair. Bob and I noticed other dayroom friends now relegated to the hallways. They sat the entire day there, with Velcro straps across the front of their wheelchairs and their clothing equipped with alarms that would go off should they try to stand (a hybrid of risk management and fall prevention). Mary seemed afraid to go into the dayroom and unwilling to leave the nursing home for a meal, as we had done in the past.

On our last visit—cheesecake in hand—we persuaded her to revisit the dayroom for lunch. With its nice glass-topped tables and an atrium-like environment, it was the one pleasant place in the building. But house-keeping wanted to clean, so we were banned from that room. We managed to find our way outside and enjoy a special moment with Mary. The cheesecake provided a simple delight that was entirely renewable. Since she didn't remember from bite to bite that the cheesecake was there, she would say, "Oh is that cheesecake? Is there chocolate in it?" A few seconds later she would happen upon another taste: "Oh is that cheesecake!?"

We took her back to her parking spot in the hallway, where Bob recognized another elderly gentleman from the old neighborhood. He surveyed the hallways stacked with very frail people slumped over in wheelchairs and said, "It's like a warehouse for people waiting to die."

On the elevator down I asked a nurse if they were working on anything to change the environment there and she proudly pointed out their new innovation: color-coded staff. Pink scrubs are the CNAs, blue is maintenance and multi-color scrubs are the nurses. That way residents don't ask the wrong person to help them.

We need to do things differently. There are still way too many "warehouses" out there.

I recently spent a week at Buchanan Place, covering for ill staff members, and I marveled once again at the contrast from Mary's warehouse to this house. I was helping one of the women there get up and dressed in the morning. She was lamenting the fact that she couldn't do these things any more herself. "I'm helpless like a baby!"

I said, "It's funny—you raised eight kids who needed lots of help to grow up, and when people get old they sometimes need lots of help. I'm helping you now and I hope someone will be there to help me." She said, "You're right, honey, that's just the way it is with life, God will bless you."

# ElderFriends Volunteers Offer Companionship

**E**lderFriends is an outreach project of ElderHealth Northwest that matches adult volunteers with isolated or home-bound elders for friendly visits. Elders are referred to the program by social workers and family members. Major funding is provided by United Way of King County and the City of Seattle.



*Alicia and Lauren, her ElderFriends volunteer.*

Since its founding in 1995, ElderFriends has matched over 700 elders with volunteer companions. In 2006, ElderFriends volunteers made over 2,000 visits to elders, with volunteers typically seeing their elders twice monthly. In addition to offering companionship, volunteers make note of their elder's needs and help them access appropriate public services. Volunteers must pass a background check, provide two character references, and attend training.

ElderFriends operates on the principle that the simple delights of friendship are just as important to an isolated elder's well-being as doctor visits.

"Many elders in the area live alone and have few or no local family members. They have limited contact with the outside world and are often quite lonely," says Kathi Church of the City of Seattle's Aging and Disability Services, an agency that regularly refers elders to ElderFriends. "I've seen dramatic positive changes in some elders after they've participated in ElderFriends. They feel important and appreciated. They have something to look forward to."

The value of each ElderFriends relationship goes far beyond companionship, as volunteers frequently look after the health of their elders. When temperatures soared dangerously high last summer, ElderFriends volunteers made special visits to ensure that their elders did not suffer in the heat. In one case, a visit resulted in a

*"The simple delights of friendship are just as important to an isolated elder's well-being as doctor visits."*

life-saving intervention. The intergenerational friendships formed through ElderFriends not only benefit the elders, but enrich the lives of volunteers as well. "It's given me appreciation for an older generation, a different culture and different perspective on life," says ElderFriends volunteer and Seattle resident Lauren Koslowski. "I can't imagine not having met her."

Lauren's ElderFriend Alicia Strauss agrees: "It makes me feel younger and happy. Lauren for me is like a real family—same for her. That's why she calls me Abuelita (Grandma)."

ElderFriends is always seeking volunteers to provide social support for isolated elders. Currently, volunteers are especially needed in South Seattle and South King County.

To volunteer for ElderFriends or to refer someone who needs companionship, please visit [www.elderfriends.org](http://www.elderfriends.org) or call (206) 224-3790.

## CONTACT ELDERHEALTH

DAY CENTERS,  
RESIDENCES  
& IN-HOME CARE  
King County

**(206) 528-5315**

### ADULT DAY HEALTH CENTERS

North Seattle (Ravenna)  
South Seattle  
(Rainier Valley)  
Downtown Seattle  
(First Hill)  
Renton (on Valley  
Medical Center Campus)

### ELDERHEALTH AT HOME

In-Home Services

### SUPPORTED LIVING HOMES

Gaffney House  
(Capitol Hill)  
Buchanan Place  
(South Seattle)

DAY CENTERS  
Snohomish County

**(425) 355-1313**

### ADULT DAY HEALTH CENTERS

Snohomish County  
(Everett)

### DAYBREAK SENIOR RESPITE PROGRAM

Snohomish, Marysville,  
Mill Creek and Edmonds

### ELDERFRIENDS

**(206) 224-3790**

### VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer Companionship

### OUR E-NEWSLETTER

Sign up today at  
[www.elderhealth.org](http://www.elderhealth.org)