



Submitted by
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RESEARCH &
VOLUNTEER
COORDINATOR

*We Help.
We Care*

OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING

120 Grandview Blvd., Gaylord, Michigan 49735

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**OTSEGO HAUS COORDINATOR
CHRISTINE HOLEWINSKI, LPN**

Caring for someone with memory loss? Have you checked out all care options?

Are you an unpaid caregiver of a family member living with memory loss? If so, you are not alone – according to the 2012 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures Report, you are one of 15 million unpaid Americans caring for someone living with Alzheimer’s or other dementia. In rural communities like ours, caregivers are often left with few options for caregiving assistance. Basic choices include caring for a family member at home (with or without the help of family and friends, or paid assistance), or placing him or her in a limited selection of foster care homes or nursing homes.

Luckily, for area residents the Otsego County Commission on Aging (OCCOA) sponsors the Otsego Haus, an adult day services center that specializes in dementia care – something unheard of in most small rural communities. Established in 2000, it has provided safe, secure daytime care for nearly 200 older adults over the past twelve years.

The Otsego Haus nurses and service providers are trained in dementia care!

Following a social/medical model, the Otsego Haus’ caring, dedicated staff includes three nurses and several service providers, many of whom are CENAs (Competency Evaluated Nursing Assistants). Together, they bring their medical expertise to each client who walks through the door each day, along with healthy doses of smiles, compassion, and respect.

Coordinator Chris Holewinski recently shared with me that “person-centered” care is a hallmark of the Otsego Haus. She explained, “Our staff strives to give individualized and personalized care to each client who attends the Otsego Haus. We sit down with the caregivers beforehand, and work out a care plan that will work best, with flexible options in mind.” She added, “The beauty of the program is that caregivers can bring their family members as little or as often as they need to.” She noted, “This is especially inviting for caregivers with busy or unpredictable schedules.”

Caregivers know that when they leave their family members in the capable hands of the Otsego Haus staff, they will be safe and secure in this home-like protected environment, as well as socially engaged and encouraged to function at the highest levels of their abilities.

The Otsego Haus is open Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Respite care is available during the evenings and on the weekends, as needed. A nurse is on duty at all times, and health monitoring is ongoing. Holewinski noted, “In spending time with our clients, we are constantly observing and monitoring their health. We are often the first ones to pick up on physical changes in them during the course of each stay, and can alert their caregivers. We can also provide daily assistance with medications and monitor blood sugar levels. Blood pressure checks are available on a monthly and as-needed basis.”

Personal Care Service is also available!

“Caregivers also use their family members’ time at the Otsego Haus to take advantage of other services that we offer, such as showers, hair care and foot care,”Holewinski highlighted. For a person with dementia, showers can be a fearful thing and something he or she resists. For a caregiver, coaxing their loved one to take a shower, let alone helping him or her with one, can be a long, exhausting process. She shared, “We are trained to provide this kind of service, and the large walk-in shower in our facility makes this kind of care much easier and safer. Our assistance to caregivers with personal care services for their family members often makes a difference on how long more expensive options can be avoided.”

Holewinski also noted that caregivers can expect dignified assistance and support for each client with personal-care needs, as well as assistance with activities of daily living, like eating. She shared, “We provide nutritious and delicious meals and snacks. We eat our meals with them and encourage and prompt them to eat. As people are in the program over longer periods of time, I often see them eating better.”

The Otsego Haus is a place of fun, where friendships are made and nurtured!

Not only does the Otsego Haus offer a safe environment, but fun and friendship are bountiful. Daily exercise is provided, according to client needs. “This helps build their muscle tone, which helps them to avoid falls,” Holewinski shared. Music by local musicians is provided weekly, and clients enjoy such hobbies as container gardening, art, and stamping. Playing games, such as cards, dominoes and BINGO, and working jigsaw puzzles are also encouraged to improve memory skills. Holewinski noted that story telling is a favorite part of the day and usually followed by lots of reminiscing. Throughout the day, these activities are punctuated with lots of conversation, smiles and laughter. At the Otsego Haus, loneliness is unknown.

It takes a great leap of faith, sometimes, for family caregivers to let strangers care for their loved ones. Holewinski shared, “At the Otsego Haus, their family members become like family to us. We hear their stories, we know their fears. We worry over them, laugh with them, and cry with them. And when they leave us for good, we cry over them, remember them, and are thankful for our time together.”

Millie, who has been a long-time client, says it best, perhaps! “The Otsego Haus is such a nice place to come to! The girls are friendly and keep us busy with interesting activities.” She concluded, “I am a very fortunate person! Here, they treat you right! They treat you good!”

The Otsego Haus will be holding an open house on Wednesday, February 27, 2013, between 10 a.m. and noon. If you are a caregiver in need of a new care option, please plan to stop in for a tour of the facility and to visit with our staff. We’d like to make your family a part of our Otsego Haus family! You can also learn more by visiting the *Adult Day Services - Otsego Haus* page on our website, www.OtsegoCountyCOA.org or by contacting the Otsego Haus at (989) 732-4121.



OTSEGO HAUS CLIENT, MILLIE, AND OTSEGO HAUS COORDINATOR CHRISTINE HOLEWINSKI SHARE A LAUGH

Please join us!
OTSEGO HAUS OPEN HOUSE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27th
10:00am to NOON
95 Livingston Blvd. • Gaylord
- Tour our facility! Meet our staff!

989.732.1122 • www.OtsegoCountyCOA.org • Advocacy 989.732.9977

IN-HOME SERVICE ~ 989.705.2574 • MEAL PROGRAM ~ 989.732.1746 • SPECIAL EVENTS ~ 989.732.4702 • VOLUNTEER ~ 989.705.2572 • WEATHER ~ 989.731.5652

Fax: 989-731-2739 • occoa@occoaonline.org • Weekdays 8:00 am to Noon and 1:00 to 4:00 pm

120 GRANDVIEW BLVD. • GAYLORD, MICHIGAN 49735