

Co-worker's Retirement Decision wasn't Easy

~Eileen Godek, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Many of us at the Otsego County Commission on Aging (OCCOA) have known for quite some time about the planned retirement at the end of 2006 of our co-worker, In-Home Service Coordinator Kathryn (Kathy) Rivers. As we head forward into this new year,

she will be missed, not only by her co-workers, but by her clients and the coffee clutch, with whom she often visited at the Alten Zimmer apartments in the morning before work.

Mixed feelings

Though there is sadness in her leaving, agency staff members are also happy for her. She and her husband, Ray, who is also retiring, share many hobbies and have some wonderful dreams planned for their retirement years. In mid-December, we sat down to chat about her retirement, as well as the staff who



Kathy Rivers and OCCOA client, Jean Poshak.

will be taking over her responsibilities. "Our retirement is starting a little later than we planned, but we're finally able to do it," she shared, smiling. "I'm mainly looking forward to spending more time with my family - especially my grandchildren." She continued, "Ray and I are also looking forward to doing some more traveling in our fifth wheel. We've traveled to some very beautiful places, but have never stayed very long in one place. I've made a list of our favorites that we hope to revisit for a little longer."

I love my job

Making the decision to retire was not an easy one," she told me. "I love my job. The agency has always been so kind to me and given me many opportunities." She commented sadly, "I'll miss, most of all, the team that I was a part of. I'll also miss the seniors that I worked with - their stories and their wisdom." Rivers, who started with OCCOA in 1994 as a service provider, was promoted four years ago to coordinator of the agency's in-home service department.

Meet the new team!

Part of the team Kathy referred to are her coworkers, Pamela Carlson, RN, the coordinator of the medical resources department and Jacalyn (Jackie) Marshall, the former assistant coordinator for the in-home service department. Pamela, who was already responsi-



**In-Home Service Coordinator
Jacalyn Marshall**

ble for new-client assessments, will take over Kathy's reassessment responsibilities. Jackie, who has been promoted to the coordinator position, will be addressing client requests, handling all service hour reports, and time sheets. She will be assisted with part-time help in the office from Sheila Markle, who is also one of the eleven service providers who provide homemaking, personal care, and respite services to the county's seniors. Sheila, who has been with the agency for about five years and who has a strong computer background, will be handling the work schedules for the service providers and helping with the phones, as well as assisting Pamela with her paperwork and files.

Smooth transition expected

Kathy shared, "Jackie and Pam and I started in our positions around the same time. Jackie, being in the same office, has had first-hand exposure to my job responsibilities - we all learned together." Kathy pointed out that Jackie and Sheila's experience in the field help them to work well with the service providers. She explained, "Having worked as service providers and knowing how challenging their jobs can be, Jackie and Sheila have great respect for all they do." She pointed out that the department's "open-door" management style has been greatly appreciated by the service providers and would be maintained. She stated, "It's a great team. They have the experience to do the work and do so from the heart." She summarized, "I expect the transition to be nice and smooth."

Going forward

The reorganized team plans on continuing to provide quality customer service. Jackie told me, "We will continue to address the whole person and all their needs, whether or not we can provide them." She explained, "Pam is very thorough in her initial assessments and very observant to changes and new needs when she conducts reassessments. If we can't provide all the help someone needs (skilled nursing care, hospice care, counseling, etc.), she makes referrals to agencies and organizations that can." Jackie also hopes to build upon the current team of eleven service providers, carrying out the agency's mission, and becoming more efficient.

We're all going to miss her!

Though the transition is expected to be smooth and everyone is trained and ready to go forward, it won't be without the sadness of Kathy's leaving. Sheila shared, "She's always been so supportive to me in both my work and personal life. I'm happy that she's going to have the opportunity to do some things she's always wanted to do, but it will be sad because she's always been here."

Pam shared, "Kathy was always a cheerleader for our service providers." She noted that Kathy is known for saying of them, "That's hard work they do. Those girls do a good job!" Both Jackie and Pam added that they will miss Kathy's homey and decorative touches to their offices - especially at the holidays. Pam noted, "She made our small office space an inviting place to be." Both noted that they'll miss Kathy's having their morning coffee ready to drink when they came to work!

Jean Poshak, one of the ladies who gather with other Alten Zimmer residents for morning coffee, shared, "Kathy always seems to have time to stop and say 'hello' to us in the morning. I receive in-home services from OCCOA and have known Kathy since I moved to the Alten Zimmer apartments four years ago. She reflected, "I'll miss her cheerful personality. We like to joke around a lot!" As for myself, I will miss Kathy's poking her head into my office with her cheerful "hello" and gentle smile and her sincere wishes to have a nice day! I'll miss hearing the pride in her voice at our office meetings when she talked about "her girls" and the fine job they are doing. Kathy, you may be leaving, but definitely not forgotten. We're already looking forward to your first visit back - we'll put the coffee on!

The agency is planning a retirement celebration for Kathy this month at the Alten Zimmer Center.