



PATHWAY

WALKING alongside

strengthening congregational community ministries

» Adult Day Health Center «

» HIGHLAND COMMUNITY MINISTRIES SENIOR SERVICES OUTREACH PROGRAM FOR OLDER ADULTS - ADULT DAY HEALTH CENTER, LOUISVILLE, KY

When church leaders in the Highlands of Louisville incorporated in 1970 to address neighborhood needs they planned ministries to serve each age group, from children to older adults, including recreational programs, classes, singles club, and other programs. Out of that master plan emerged Highland Community Ministries (HCM) Senior Services, an ecumenical program for older adults. It started in 1975 with two programs, the Outreach Program and the Adult Day Health Center. Since 1984, HCM has also offered affordable apartments for people who are older or physically handicapped.

HCM is made up of 24 churches of different denominations in the Highlands area of Louisville. HCM Senior Services helps seniors who are independent, homebound or in need of supervised care. Through the outreach program, HCM advocates for seniors, counsels them about benefits, and offers transportation and Meals on Wheels. The outreach program also operates a senior center. The Adult Day Health Center offers supervised care for Alzheimer's patients or those who have other health issues.

"We were the first adult day center in Louisville and the second in the state," said director Mary Lynne Masterson. At St. Paul United Methodist Church, where the program began, planners first provided social activities for the older adults who came into the day center. In the late 1970s, they added health services, including a registered nurse who oversees the health care needs of clients who come into the center, working with their caregivers and doctors. "They expanded programs as they saw a need," Masterson said.

Goals of the ministry

The goals of the Adult Day Health Center, which serves all parts of Louisville, include:

- Keeping the client mentally and physically active to promote a maximum level of independence
- Maintaining or improving the client's level of function
- Preventing or delaying deteriorating function and restoring to a higher level of function
- Supporting families and other caregivers.

The Adult Day Health Center fosters socialization and care interaction. "Clients' loved ones want to keep them at home for as long as possible, and that's our goal," Masterson said. Workers offer activities for Alzheimer's patients and other frail elderly, giving caregivers a break and offering clients supervised care in a safe environment. In addition to structured activities, those attending eat breakfast, a lunch provided by Louisville Metro Senior Nutrition, and an afternoon snack.

Funding the ministry

The Adult Day Health Center is fee-based, and caregivers can pay by the day. The program provides financial help to clients who meet income guidelines, and caregivers who want to try out the program can schedule a free trial day. The program also accepts Medicaid, and the state provides financial help through the Kentuckiana Regional Planning & Development Agency. The community also provides financial support through fundraisers like bake sales and donations that come from congregations and others in the community.

MORE ON BACK

» Adult Day Health Center «

Recruiting volunteers

With its long history, "Our name is out there," Masterson said. Volunteers are recruited through advertisements in brochures, health fairs, newsletters, church bulletins and word of mouth. Many of the volunteers are students, part of another nonprofit agency that provides support services to mentally challenged clients, or other senior adults. Volunteers perform a variety of tasks. "They lead games and activities, help us serve lunch, walk and talk with the client, and lead them to the restrooms," Masterson said.

Structure of the program

Clients of the Highlands Adult Day program must need a supervised care environment, which means they cannot stay home alone throughout the day. "We don't turn away anyone who has a need, but they must be able to help us help them. If we cannot serve the client to the best of our ability, then we will refer them to another center."

The center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and generally serves people older than 60, with the average age being 80-90. However, clients can be under 60 if their disability requires they need supervised care. Workers are seeing clients enter the program at a more advanced age, and they are not staying as long as they previously have. "It used to be two to five years. Now it's six months to two years," Masterson said.

Promoting the program to the community

Word of mouth is the best promotion, Masterson said, and many clients call after looking in the phone book for senior services. But workers also make sure that its newsletters detail services and that the program is represented in church bulletins, community health fairs and in appropriate advertising. They also host open houses and use an e-mail network to notify colleagues in social service agencies when there is an opening. "It's just to remind people—we never have a waiting list," Masterson said.

Program as evangelism

Because the program is government-funded, clients must initiate requests for prayer or discussions of religion. "Some request to play Bible trivia," Masterson said, and those requests are honored. "We embrace all faiths that walk through," she added. "We are ecumenical."

By: Barabara Elmore

Stepping Stones

Brief descriptions of how to implement specific ministries. For each of the five broader areas above, many ministries can be envisioned. We have identified a few of these for each area and have articulated the steps for how that ministry might be planned.

Backpacks

The Walking Alongside Web site provides a Backpack of additional resources and examples for this specific ministry. Included are published articles, Web sites, selected books, testimonials and existing ministries with contact information.

Food for the Journey

A short devotional based on scripture that can be used in church bulletins, as a Moment for Mission during worship or as an introduction to a Bible study.

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