

DAY SERVICES FOR SENIORS

In January, 2005 I lost my wife. I was already wheelchair bound due to an illness and after my wife's passing I had to rely on my daughter to assist me with many daily activities. I became depressed and socially isolated. Really, the only person that I saw was my daughter and on occasion, my other child would stop in when they were in town. In April 2005, a VA nurse and social worker stopped by my home and told me about Day Services for Seniors in Benton Harbor. They suggested I give it a try. I have to admit at first I was nervous. It was something new that I didn't know much about, but I was going to have the opportunity of meeting some new people. When I came by Day Services for a tour, I was pleased to hear there would be other veterans at the center with me. I started attending Day Services for Seniors four days a week in May 2005. It was one of the best decisions of my life. I am no longer depressed or socially isolated. Not only am I able to visit with adults, but also children because Day Services offers an intergenerational program.

An average day at Day Services starts with transportation that picks me up from my home. When I arrive at Day Services in the morning there is always a small breakfast available along with great conversation with the staff and fellow clients. I am able to get my daily exercise in while working out with the whole group after breakfast. They have a wide variety of activities for me to choose from. I am able to complete word search puzzles, coloring pages and have challengers for a game of checkers. They give me a monthly calendar which allows me to know what activities and outings are coming up. Day Services offers handicap accessible outings regularly which allows me to get out into the community. I am able to attend the Brown bag concerts in St. Joseph, head to Mattawan to take a tour of their fish hatchery and occasionally we are able to have lunch at local restaurants. When I am not on a group outing I might be headed out on an outing with the Day Service's Men's group. We meet on Friday afternoons and discuss different topics. The most recent outing was to the local bowling alley which was able to accommodate me in my wheelchair so that I was able to bowl with the group. When the Less We Forget Vietnam War Wall came to St. Joseph, I knew that I wanted to see it. If it had not been for Day Services, I would not have been able to see the wall in person.



Community Impact of Day Services for Seniors

Seniors who use Adult Day Care services often have fewer hospitalizations; fewer falls and improved or maintained mental and emotional health, including the three plagues of elders: loneliness, helplessness and boredom. Our program philosophy and mission is to assure the highest quality of life for the senior citizens we serve and to assist them in maintaining independence in their homes and in their communities for as long as possible. During 2009, we provided more than 5,800 days of care to an average of 42 clients per day. In addition, we have clients who participate in our Day Services program on average of 3,150 per week.

2009 Outcomes

- 89% of our clients remained in their homes for a full calendar year without having to be admitted to a nursing home.
- 100% of the caregivers who responded to our satisfaction survey said that stress was reduced and they would recommend DSS services to others.

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