

# The Beacon

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IN FOCUS FOR PEOPLE OVER 50

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## A little help goes a long way

By Barbara Ruben

After Jimmy Petty suffered a stroke 20 years ago, he could no longer keep up with his job at a lawn installation company. But Petty was still able to care for himself and enjoyed cooking for, and socializing with, fellow residents at Waverly House, a subsidized senior apartment building in Bethesda, Md.

However, over the years, his memory began failing, he fell frequently, and rarely cooked for himself.

His son Calvin Muse stepped in, visiting Petty's apartment several times a week to help with the laundry and to ensure that his father had food. Then Muse moved to Georgia for a few years, and his wife was later diagnosed with breast cancer.

"That's when he really fell off the cliff," Muse said of his father, who is now 79. "I didn't know what to do. My older brother doesn't do much. It's my responsibility to make sure he's getting what he needs."

Even when Muse moved back to Maryland, he felt like he was drowning in responsibilities for his dad, wife, two daughters and his job.

Meanwhile, Petty had gone downhill to the point where he could no longer live independently. While a few hours a week of home care could have addressed his needs, he couldn't afford the cost — an average of \$21 an hour in the Washington area, according to a 2012 MetLife survey. It looked like he would have to move to a nursing home.

### Local foundation provides help

Fortunately, instead Petty got assistance from the Family & Nursing Care Foundation, a local private foundation. It makes grants to two local nonprofits, which in turn provide free home care to needy local residents who can't afford to pay for it on their own.

Foundation funds paid for four hours a week of home care for Petty — enough to get him back on his feet and enable him to remain at Waverly House.

For Sandy Kursban, the chair and founder of the foundation, providing such assistance is the crowning achievement of her 45 years at the helm of Family & Nursing Care, a Silver Spring-based home care agency.

"We have potential clients call and sometimes, when we tell them the prices,

PHOTO BY SARAH FLEISCHER



Sandy Kursban (left) started the Family & Nursing Care Foundation to help fund home care services for local residents who can't afford them. The foundation provides grants to Home Care Partners and Rockville Community Ministries to help low-income older adults, such as Jimmy Petty, pictured with caregiver Arlene Graham.

there's this silence, and we know the cost is beyond their means.

"My heart goes out to them because we know how important this help would be to them," Kursban said. "So I was always thinking, 'One day that's what I want to do — be able to help these people, too.'"

When Kursban stepped down as president and her son Neal took over the family business in 2008, she decided it was time to find a way to help those with limited resources get help with dressing, eating and other activities of daily living to allow them to age in place.

So she set up the foundation, which has made grants for the last three years to two nonprofit organizations: Home Care Part-

ners and the Elderly Ministries program of Rockville Community Ministries. Both provide home care and coordinate resources for senior clients.

"The Foundation stepped in to support these organizations at a time when they were faced with losing county funding and were going to have to reduce the vital services they provide to low-income seniors," Kursban said. "With the Foundation grants, they have been able to continue to serve this vulnerable population and actually increase the lives they touch."

Family & Nursing Care Foundation is a fund of the Community Foundation for

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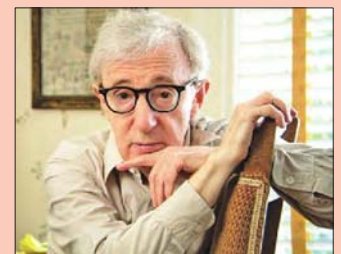
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## Home care

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Montgomery County, a tax-exempt, public charity made up of charitable giving funds established by individuals, families, corporations and other organizations. *[For information on how individuals can contribute through such foundations, see "Be an effective philanthropist for \$1,000" on page 31.]*

In addition to Kursban's personal contributions to the foundation, Family & Nursing Care staff members also make voluntary contributions, as do individual donors, including clients' families.

### Aging in place

Receiving just a few hours of care a week is all some frail seniors need, according to Marla Lahat, executive director of Home Care Partners, based in Washington, D.C.

"When we get a grant from Family & Nursing Care, it makes all the difference for some people who otherwise wouldn't get the care to stay in their own homes," Lahat said. "That's the bottom line. Without this care, they would end up in a nursing home. It makes a huge, huge difference."

That's been the case for Jimmy Petty, whose Home Care Partners aide Arlene Graham visits him twice a week. She cajoles him to eat, washes his dishes and clothes, and helps him shower.

"Mr. Petty has such a wonderful smile. I really enjoy coming in to help him," she said.

And Calvin Muse is especially happy. "[These] guys have really bridged the gap for me. I appreciate Arlene so much. I couldn't ask for anything more," he said.

The Foundation's support helped Petty

for months, until he came off the waiting list for a Medicaid waiver, which now provides for his home care and other needed services.

### Bonding with caregivers

Other clients who receive support from foundation-funded aides have similar stories.

Neeko Akpan, another Waverly House resident, said he's "always been as independent as could be." But when his prostate cancer spread to his bones and he needed spinal surgery two years ago, he found he needed help with everyday tasks.

"There were some days I couldn't even operate my computer," said Akpan, 79. "But as time went on, I got better and better. I'm at about 75 percent now."

An aide visits him three days a week for two hours at a time. She helped change his dressings after surgery, and cleans the bathroom and kitchen.

"She's the type of worker who doesn't ask what needs to be done. She would see it and just do it. It would be very, very hard for me to get by without her," Akpan said.

Catherine Oyarzo feels the same way about her home care worker. While Oyarzo's daughter and granddaughters help drive her to medical appointments, they lead busy lives, said Oyarzo, who has diabetic neuropathy and uses a walker to get around.

"I'm a very independent lady. But I find I tire very easily. When an aide comes, I feel a lot better and we talk. She cheers me up. She asks me how I am. Things like that," said Oyarzo, who lives in Forest Oak Towers, an apartment building for low-income seniors in Gaithersburg, Md.

In addition to socializing, the aide does

Oyarzo's laundry and other tasks in her apartment. The aide is there just two hours a week, but Oyarzo said she's amazed at how that small amount of time makes a huge difference in her life.

"It has enabled me to stay in my home," she said. "I am eternally grateful."

For more information about the Family & Nursing Care Foundation, see [www.familynursingcarefoundation.org](http://www.familynursingcarefoundation.org) or call (301) 588-8200. Presently, the nonprofit home care providers are only taking foundation-supported clients from existing residents of select low-income buildings.

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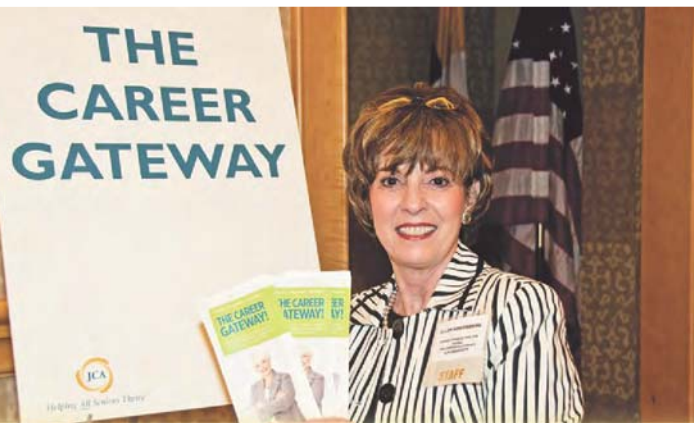
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### BEACON BITS

#### Ongoing

#### HELP DELIVER MEALS OR OFFER IT HELP

Colesville Meals on Wheels, an independent group of volunteers delivering meals in the Northeast Silver Spring, Md., area to those that are no longer able to cook for themselves, needs more volunteers. In addition to drivers, the group is also looking for help with technical support for its computer system, including the website and general troubleshooting. If interested, call (301) 384-5735.

#### Feb. 28

#### SEEKING MS. VIRGINIA SENIOR AMERICA

The search is underway for women 60 years of age and over to represent Virginia in the 2013 Ms. Virginia Senior America competition, to be held in Staunton, Va., on May 17. Orientation for candidates is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 28 in Arlington, Va. For more information, contact State Director Annmarie Pittman at (703) 549-7012 or [annmariep@comcast.net](mailto:annmariep@comcast.net), or visit [www.msvirginiasenior.com](http://www.msvirginiasenior.com).

#### Feb. 9

#### AARP DRIVER SAFETY COURSE

The AARP Driver Safety Course will be offered from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 9, at Seabury at Friendship Terrace. The class teaches current rules of the road, defensive driving techniques, and how to operate a vehicle safely in today's increasingly challenging driving environment. Some automobile insurance companies offer discounts for completion of the course. Friendship Terrace is at 4201 Butterworth Pl. NW, Washington, D.C. Enrollment is \$12 for AARP members, \$14 for nonmembers. For registration and more information, call Erin Hansen at (202) 244-