

Inside Blue Ridge PACE

A Day in the Life at the Program for All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)

Growing older and spending time alone can often be synonymous. For Anne, the television had become a constant companion. No longer driving due to health concerns, Anne found it harder to get out of the house and stay active. Her family was not always able to transport her and health problem made doctors' appointments necessary but not easy to attend.

Anne's family wanted a better lifestyle for their mom. They wanted to keep her mind working and alert, so she would not become depressed. In March 2014, Anne became one of the first participants at Blue Ridge PACE, a Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly.

"I enjoy everything about the PACE program," says Anne, who had some previous experience with PACE in Richmond. Blue Ridge PACE provides transportation Monday through Friday for Anne and others living in Charlottesville and the surrounding region. Anne arrives at the Blue Ridge PACE Center at 1335 Carlton Avenue in Charlottesville around 9:30 AM where she is greeted by familiar and caring staff and participants. Walking and getting around the spacious new center are activities Anne embraces. "I used to sit and watch TV pretty much every day at home, but now I look forward to coming to PACE," says Anne, "where I can do so many things." Some of her favorite activities include Wii bowling, flower arranging and field trips.

A league bowler in her earlier years, Anne very much enjoys Wii bowling. "It doesn't feel like therapy," says Anne, "it's fun!" According to physical therapist and registered nurse, Anthony Nappi, "We try to incorporate fun and recreation into physical therapy sessions as often as we can." Anne also receives nutritious morning and afternoon snacks, along with a full lunch, prepared by a team of dietary experts. "The food here is delicious," she says, "I can't think of any one favorite meal, because it's all good!"

If Anne has health concerns and needs to see a Blue Ridge PACE nurse or the center's doctor, a board-certified geriatrician, she can visit the onsite health clinic Monday through Friday. The clinic can perform routine lab tests, as well. For questions or medical concerns after regular center hours, Anne contacts the on-call nurse. And, if Anne needs a dental exam or requires a new pair of glasses, she or her family, along with the Blue Ridge PACE team of caregivers, assesses her needs and arranges care.

Upon enrolling in the PACE program, Anne and her family were asked to set some goals—things they hoped she would be able to accomplish with the help of Blue Ridge PACE's services. Among Anne's goals were 1) Sleeping better at night and 2) Moving around more easily throughout the day. "I'm definitely sleeping better at night," says Anne. And according to Anne's daughter Linda, "She's more self sufficient and able to join in with the family."

"All around I feel pretty good, but it bothers me I can't lift things the way I used to," Anne says. With many therapy options at Blue Ridge PACE, such as occupational, speech, recreational and physical, Anne has the opportunity to participate in strength and wellness programs to improve her overall health. If medication is warranted in Anne's Blue Ridge PACE plan of care the medicine is provided - whether it's over-the-counter or prescription. According to Linda, the pills are packaged in such a format that it's easy for Anne or her caregiver to help administer the medication.

Leaving the Center at 4:00 PM, Anne rides the bus back home, where a BR PACE universal care partner (UCP) meets her to fix dinner and help Anne and her family clean up. "Dianna is wonderful," says Linda, "she's like family. Mom sees her both at home and at the PACE Center." Continuity of care and home care giving are another integral part of the PACE program.

Linda is happy to see that her mom always has a smile on her face when she comes home from Blue Ridge PACE. "It's a wonderful place to be," says Anne.

Heidi White is the Enrollment Coordinator for Blue Ridge PACE. To learn more about the PACE program and Blue Ridge PACE call 434-529-1300.