

NC PACE SUCCESS STORIES

Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly



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<http://dma.ncdhhs.gov/providers/programs-services/long-term-care/program-of-all-inclusive-care-for-the-elderly>

Arden's Story



After many years working with the FBI, over 20 years working as a registered dietitian, and becoming both a mother and grandmother, Arden, 64, had only one major goal left in life – “My number one goal in life was to work hard, so I could benefit from everything that comes along with early retirement.”

But early retirement did not happen the way Arden hoped. She contracted a mystery illness in her 50's, causing her to fall frequently. When Arden could no longer live safely alone, she moved back to North Carolina to live with her daughter, Amanda. As a fulltime employee and mother of a young child, Amanda knew caring for her mother was going to be a challenge.

“She was literally hospitalized and admitted at least every three months due to frequent falls,” Amanda said. “We thought my mother had had a stroke. She was no longer able to cook, use the microwave, fold clothes, button her shirt, or walk.”

Arden's first day at PACE

Following months of testing, she was diagnosed with hydrocephalus and underwent numerous spinal taps and surgery. After one successful surgery, Arden was discharged with home health services, and introduced to PACE of the Southern Piedmont in Charlotte.

Arden's neurologist told her she would never walk again, but Arden was determined. After several months of working with the PACE rehab department, Arden now walks with the assistance of a cane. Despite 42 falls and numerous hospitalizations before PACE, she has not been hospitalized for a fall since enrolling in PACE more than two years ago. “Seven years of what felt like a roller coaster had finally ended,” Amanda shares with relief.

But Arden's success did not stop there. With the help of her social worker, interdisciplinary team, daughter Amanda, and a referral to a neurologist to work on cognition issues, Arden was able to transition successfully into a Charlotte Housing Authority (CHA) Senior Apartment. Arden once again lives independently.

Arden has a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), coordinated by PACE, who helps her daily in the home with medication management, moderate cooking, and safety in the shower. Arden also attends the Day Health and Wellness program, where she continues to receive training on how to function safely in the home, build her strength, and socialize with a group of her new-found friends.

“I love getting a good laugh as I relate to those my age, and we talk about kids and the crazy things they do today,” stated Arden cheerfully.

Arden is thankful for all of the services provided by her primary care physician, and the Day Health and Wellness Center. The interdisciplinary team at PACE also helps her daughter Amanda handle the competing priorities of being a good mother, daughter and employee. “It is almost like there is a layer in my life I am now allowed to let go of, and let PACE (take care of it)”

Manu's Story



Manu at the Randolph County Walk to End Alzheimer's

Edited from an article in the Asheboro Courier-Tribune. Read more about Manu in the [Courier-Tribune](#).

Manu, 79, has Alzheimers Disease, the most common form of dementia. When he does speak, it is just a word or two – maybe three. But he still gets joy out of life. He laughs and hums and frequently uses hand gestures to try to communicate.

“I think he knows me,” he wife, Joan, said. “We haven’t had a conversation in a real long time. I long to hear that voice.”

In his native Iran many years ago, he managed catering for an airline. He emigrated to the United States decades ago. During his working days in this country, Manu, worked as an inspector for the Randolph County Health Department and a partner in a cafeteria at Randolph Mall.

Joan longs to keep her husband at home, but it is difficult to be a full-time caregiver for someone with such expansive needs. “I know he’s still there. I feel it,” Joan says. “I don’t see fear at all. He’s still embracing life like he always did, but what he can do is less.”

She plays Persian music for him, though he seems pleased with any music that has a good beat. He enjoys rummaging through a little box stocked with some of his old things. Each year, on the first day of Spring, Joan sets up a haft-seen - a tabletop arrangement of symbolic items for the Persian new year.

Joan longs to keep him connected to his old life, but keeping him at home was getting more and more difficult. “I was crying a lot,” she said.

Then she found help through StayWell Senior Care in Asheboro, which received start-up funding from Randolph Hospital, Cone Health, and Hospice of Randolph County. The PACE-certified program opened in late 2014.

Manu has been in the StayWell program for a little more than a year. Three days a week, a van picks him up and takes him to the StayWell facility. A StayWell Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) comes to his home for a few hours on another day.

That frees Joan more than 20 hours a week to clean house, to prepare meals, to run errands — or to do nothing — and leaves just three days a week when she has around-the-clock duty.

“Being focused on something else other than the caregiver aspect of my life has helped me be a better caregiver, too.”

She thinks of the members of the StayWell staff as extended family.

“He’s a gentle soul,” Joan said of her husband. “He’s a wonderful, beautiful man, unique, not like anyone you’ve met or will ever meet. The last place I wanted him to be was in a nursing home. I wanted to keep him home where he had a connection, where he could be Manu.”

Steven's Story



Steven enjoying therapy in the Snoezelen Room at LIFE Center

Steven spent the majority of his time alone at his home before enrolling in the PACE program at the LIFE Center at St. Joseph of the Pines in Fayetteville.

"It was boring," Steven says. "I mainly sat around watching TV. I didn't go anywhere."

Steven, 58, a disabled former truck driver, discovered PACE in 2013 after picking up a flyer on the program at a doctor's office.

"I called the people at LIFE and they told me that the PACE program could help me do more," he says.

Indeed, the PACE staff has helped Steven become more active, manage his medicines, and stay up-to-date on his doctors' appointments, among a plethora of other quality of life improvements.

"The staff takes care of me whenever I need help," he says. "I can't ask for a better staff than what they've got here. I also have a lot of friends here. All of these people truly care about me and my wellbeing."

Steven gives a lot of credit to Taylor Whittenton, a recreational therapist at LIFE.

"She helps me when I'm down," he says. "We work with guided imagery and music to help me feel calm and at ease."

Whittenton notes that the Snoezelen Room at LIFE provides a soothing and stimulating experience for PACE participants like Steven.

"It's a multi-sensory experience created by Dutch therapists that has grown into a worldwide movement," she says. "There is a deepening level of relaxation that involves all five senses – visual, hearing, touch, smell and taste."

"Many of our participants ask, 'Do I really have to leave?' when their session is done."

Steven typically attends PACE from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. every weekday.

"I play bingo, I do puzzles, and I actually do exercises in the gym," he says. "I have so much fun here. Instead of sitting at the house being bored all the time, I come here and feel better because I'm not by myself."

Steven and his wife, Rhonda, who works at the local newspaper during the day, also get out of the house more often in the evenings and on weekends.

"I'm really happy with PACE," he says. "It's done a lot for me. I never realized how much people care about me until I leave here and come back. This program is wonderful."

Beth's Story



Beth

Beth wasn't used to needing help. The retired social worker moved to Asheville from California after a long career serving at-risk youth. She didn't know many people in the area when she experienced multiple traumatic events in a short time period; several of her family members died, a longtime relationship ended, and she had many health challenges including complications from diabetes and a stroke that left her with balance and memory problems.

Beth remembers those years as "the dark days." She didn't leave home very often and was frequently alone. She wondered about her purpose in life and, as time progressed, became increasingly distressed. Her life had become unmanageable, and she was nearly evicted due to hygiene and house-keeping issues.

"I was desperate," Beth says. "My next step was being in a home or assisted living, but that thought was heartbreaking."

Then someone told Beth about CarePartners PACE program, and in her words "a miracle happened." Beth began to come to the PACE center a few days per week, and PACE workers also came to her home to help her manage things there.

"For any problem I have, they are there. I needed the structure they brought to my life," says Beth. "I've never been so pampered! They clean my apartment, help with my hygiene, got my meds right, and stick with my like glue. I get exercise and the staff is so full of warmth and love."

Issues that Beth had dealt with for a long time were resolved quickly, such as affording a hearing aid. "Things don't linger and get worse. If I'm sick, I can see the doctor or talk to someone and get it taken care of right away. I don't worry about co-pays, bills, appointments, or transportation. They take care of that for me," Beth says, noting that this was especially important given issues she experiences with attention and memory.

Most importantly, PACE gave Beth a social network and an opportunity to continue the life of service she'd always known. "I've made so many close friends since I've been here—amazing people. One of my friends here was part of the Women's Airforce in London! Another was a professional tennis player. The conversations we have are incredible. We have so much fun! And I can be a listening ear for others who just need to be understood," Beth says.

She recalls the story of one man who had a stroke that left him with some physical disabilities. He came in somewhat shy, and now is the best dancer of the bunch. "The sparkle in his eye when he's dancing! It's like nothing else," she says tearfully. "Friendship is healing."

For any problem I have, they are there.

Arthur's Story



Arthur with StayWell therapists

In 2011, In after an accident and some medical complications, Arthur found his life changed forever. After his initial post-injury hospital stay, Arthur went home to be cared for by his family. He received post-injury therapy at home, but this was discontinued after his insurance source said he met his “maximum potential.” Over the next three years, he spent 90 percent of his days in bed.

That was until January 2015, when Arthur, 60, enrolled in PACE at StayWell Senior Care in Asheboro. Since joining the program, Arthur has set goals for himself with the help of StayWell therapy services. He attends the PACE center five days a week, where he can be found in the gym, socializing with staff and other participants or quietly enjoying the sunshine outside. When asked where he would be without the PACE program his response is simply “at home staring at the walls.”

PACE provides Arthur with a sense of independence. It also provides his wife with the support she needs to continue caring for her husband at home. “It is nice to know someone is taking good care of him and giving him the care he needs” she said.

She describes her husband as a man of few words who seems to have now found his voice through PACE. She has seen overall improvement in her husband. Most importantly, she feels he is finding a “new normal” that is much better than him spending his days in bed.

PACE also provides his wife with the support she needs to continue caring for her husband at home.