



INDIANAPOLIS STAR METRO/STATE * MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2009

As We Age, Home is Where the Need Is

Local businesses provide services so senior citizens can avoid having to move into a care facility.

Jan Roberts was able to use her own experience as her home-care business for seniors grew.

Not long after she launched **Alliance Home Health Care** in 1991, her own mother began needing help to stay in her home.

“It was a challenge, and it made me very sympathetic to other families,” said Roberts, 61. “A lot of them are like my mother. They don’t want to bother their own families. They don’t want to worry anyone, but they also don’t want to go into a facility where someone else will have to take care of them.”

The Central Indiana Council on Aging estimates there are 240,000 people older than 60 in Central Indiana. It’s a segment of the population that continues to grow as baby boomers age and is expected to represent one in five Americans within the next 20 years.

There already are numerous businesses like Roberts’ that offer home care for older adults, and that number, too, is expected to grow.

Charles Smiley and his wife, Christina Williams, own an Indianapolis franchise of ComForcare Senior Services that serves Hendricks County and most of Marion County. Another franchise serves Marion, Hamilton and Boone counties.

The company provides nonmedical home care “to help people stay in their home and maintain their independence and dignity,” Smiley said. Services include help with bathing, grooming and hygiene, transportation and errands, light housekeeping, light laundry and meal preparation.

A registered nurse designs each care plan in consultation with the client, the client’s primary physician and family members. The plan is carried out by a certified nurse’s aide, a home health aide, a companion or sitter, depending on the level of services needed.

Alliance, based on the Far Northside of Indianapolis, began modestly.

“We started as a small home care in a retirement community,” Roberts said. “Our first office was a broom closet. We only had three or four employees.”



The company now serves the entire Indianapolis metropolitan area and employs about 300 people. Its average client is 83 years old, and staff members include companion homemakers, home health aides, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, physical therapists, speech therapists and social workers. They provide a variety of services, such as light housekeeping, yardwork and meal preparation.

“We try to customize our service because everyone is different, and everyone needs different things,” Roberts said. “Whatever they need, we try to get.”

In addition to around-the-clock care, Alliance supplies services for as few as two hours a week. It also aids apartment residents at assisted living communities who don’t want to move to a different unit with a higher level of care, according to Kelly Panzer, marketing director.

Alliance and ComForcare conduct extensive background checks on their employees, including drug screens and criminal-background checks.

Rachel Hunter said she is pleased with Alliance’s services, which have helped her 86-year-old mother-in-law, Jane Hunter, remain in the Indianapolis home where she has lived since 1948. Rachel Hunter and her husband, Tom, live there, too, in order to help out.

An Alliance employee visits twice a week to help Jane bathe and dress herself without falling. “I’m not trained how to help her with the bath,” Rachel said. “So I don’t want to take any chances.”