

Elder Services offers peace of mind

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"She's my angel," says 88-year-old Victoria Conrad of her daughter, Christie Swanson. "I lost my husband nine years ago, and moved here from Davenport three years ago." Christie has a demanding fulltime job and a family but makes time to help her mom in many ways, including bringing her to Elder Services' offices for the holiday celebration sponsored by AARP and the Johnson County Task Force on Aging.

They already knew of Elder Services from working with our Options Counselor, Barb Faust, to locate supportive services. Victoria is adamant that she "wanted to live by myself as long as I can. I couldn't live by myself (in her previous residence in Davenport). We called (Elder Services) to see what help there was available."

With a deteriorating lower spine, Victoria has found her mobility limited and now requires a walker. "I got a man to clean every other week" from the Elder Services' Chore program, which provides home assistance. "I don't always feel well enough to cook," so arrangements were made to receive our Meals on Wheels homebound delivery.

As important as a hot meal and a clean house is, Victoria's once a week companion provided through the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program's (RSVP) Friendly Visitor, which matches seniors with University of Iowa College of Nursing students, is just as crucial. The loss of mobility was accompanied by a loss of social interaction, causing great concern to the family. Daughter Christie says her mom so looks forward to those visits; "When I call Mom, I can hear in her voice the glow on her face."

Faust said, "Each situation is so unique. My goal is to help callers, whether seniors or their caregivers, geriatric professionals or concerned family members, to figure out what is needed -- then to research resources and make the arrangements if necessary."

Elder Services provides confidential counseling at no charge despite the loss of \$75,000 in state funding this fiscal year to support Options Counseling, the cornerstone of the Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) at Elder Services.

"Working with Barb was a godsend," Christie says, "And beyond easy. I feel now that mom is settled, and happily so. I can finally relax knowing that she's fine even when I'm not there."

Christie and her mom have a devoted relationship so the happiness of one is definitely linked to the happiness of the other. "She's my best friend. I couldn't stop worrying till we had the services in place that she needed to be safe, and to feel independent. Mom even tells me she knows when she's doing good, that I'm doing better."

"My mom always says -- make the most of every day." Thanks to the information, assistance and services provided by Elder Services, both Victoria and Christie are able to do that.



Christie swanson utilizes help offered by Elder Services to help care for her mother, 88-year-old Victoria Conrad. (Special to the Press-Citizen)