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The Patient's Advocate

An update from a national leader in home-based medicine



**Housecall
Providers**

Part of the CareOregon Family

Improving lives
by bringing
health care home



Housecall Providers Hospice ‘umbrella of care’ helped Myrtle Harles and her family so much, she ‘graduated’ from hospice to receive in-home primary care again.

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Seamless transition: From primary care to hospice and back again

A cascade of health problems can bring a person to a precarious state. But with the right care, it is possible to find a way back.

Myrtle Harles was a Housecall Providers primary care patient at Farmington Square’s memory care unit when she fell and broke her hip. Following hospitalization and rehab, she was able to return to Farmington Square. But declining health, weight loss and the COVID-19-imposed visitor ban made recovery more difficult. Her health was so fragile that her care team referred to Housecall Providers Hospice.

Daughter Susan Garland says: “I had the reaction they said

everyone has – that mom wasn’t going to make it very long. But the care team explained what hospice is and the benefits, like enabling the passage to the next step, assisting the family or experiencing a bounce from it, which is exactly what happened to mom.”

It is not uncommon for newly enrolled hospice patients to “get a bounce,” a term that refers to feeling better because the hospice team addresses

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Art studio owner Joe LaSorella gets the once-over from Nurse Practitioner Barb Sutton.

Art studio owner stays independent with help from in-home primary care

Joe LaSorella knows better than to take his independence for granted. He's made choices that determine his autonomy. And he sees Housecall Providers as a partner in keeping his independence.

When you walk into LaSorella Studios, you see a busy craft studio, anchored by a large, L-shaped workbench with beautiful stained-glass windows in varying states of assembly. Employees meticulously match glass colors, heat metal, and other tasks to make and repair stained-glass pieces. From his rolling office chair, owner Joe, a Housecall Providers primary care patient, oversees the workers, reviews the day's orders or talks on the phone with a client.

Joe keeps the wheels rolling on his stained-glass studio because he enjoys the work. The level of independence he enjoys is a testament to his work ethic and his determination. Joe has spinal stenosis, a genetic disorder that affects his ability to use his hands and limits his mobility. But his legs can still push his big-wheeled chair around the office and shop, where he can oversee workers and manage operations. Well into his seventies, he is slowing down a little and can

no longer use the tools his hands know so well, but he still puts in a full day's work.

Joe is keenly aware that his independence has a lot to do with his choices over the years. "In a wheelchair that someone else is pushing you don't have the control or the peace of mind necessarily. So, I feel comfortable in the house. We've always got people around and I can do most things myself."

Housecall Providers works with him to keep him comfortable and in control. "It is a godsend to have the doctor come to my home. Bundling me up to go to the doctor, I need to push myself backwards down the ramp and have one of the big guys here pick me up under my arms and put me in the car. Then, do it all over again to get back home." Without skipping a beat, he deadpans, "it's a little bit of an ordeal." Sparing Joe this ordeal helps him continue to thrive despite his obstacles. "They can also do tests and blood work; I couldn't ask for more – it's a big relief."

In his bustling studio where artisans repair or build magnificent works of art, Joe conducts the process like a circus ringmaster and makes it clear he is just as often the one providing the help. Joe likes it that way.

His care team at Housecall Providers likes it that way too. ■



Rita Isaac, right, talks about in-home primary care with Askol Saieedi, executive director of Barbur Vista Care.

Meet Rita Isaac: Housecall Providers first-ever primary care liaison

How long have you been working in health care?

I have been working in health care for seven years.

What attracted you to work at Housecall Providers?

The mission, longevity of the leadership team, culture, and how staff were treated are just a few of the things that attracted me to this organization.

Tell us your vision/plan/goal for this new position?

I want to be a resource to our care teams and help to

strengthen our community partnerships, along with spreading the word about the amazing work we do at Housecall Providers.

What about this position do you find interesting/challenging?

I think it is interesting that we have never had someone in this role before, so we can make it what we need it to be. It's challenging having such a large territory but also fun getting to see all the different areas and communities that we serve.

How do you see this position supporting patient-centered care?

Housecall Providers has never had to do primary care marketing in the sense of having someone in the field promoting our in-home medical care. That means there are many seriously ill and homebound individuals who do not know about this community asset, and that is where I come in. I also think we want to know when there are opportunities for improvement in our service, so I am here to listen too. All of this goes hand in hand with supporting patient-centered care.

You've only been here a little over two months now, what are some of the things you are hearing from the community?

Our community partners LOVE Housecall Providers! A lot of our partners wish all their residents could be on service and they appreciate the wonderful communication from our teams.

Finally, what do you do to recharge?

I play with my girls, cook, and hike. I love the outdoors. ■

Have questions about hospice care?

Reach out to our office at **971-202-5501** to discuss any questions or get more information.

Love and care: A potent combination for health and well-being

While many of us spend years in pursuit of our life's calling, Pauline Ngangira, house manager of "The Ranch" Adult Care Home (ACH), arrived at hers early in life.



Pauline Ngangira loves "her ladies" and credits Housecall Providers with helping them stay healthy.

When her grandmother could not live alone anymore, Pauline's mother moved in to help with caregiving. Seeing her mother's commitment to compassionately caring for her grandmother sparked something deep inside of her.

"I would stay with my grandmother too and really enjoyed talking with her and providing company and comfort. At that point, I developed the love I have for the elderly, and the inspiration to continue caring for my ladies."

Her "ladies" are her five residents at the all-female ACH in Gresham. Three of them are under the care of Housecall Providers Nurse Practitioner Barb Sutton.

"Pauline and her staff are great," says Barb. "They are very loving

and attentive to their residents and very welcoming to me. They do such a wonderful job, other members of our care team (social worker, nursing, spiritual care) aren't called upon, so regular check-ins are usually all they require."

Pauline credits Housecall Providers with keeping her residents as healthy as possible: "Having a primary care provider who is reachable when we have issues that are not necessarily emergencies, but which do require immediate advice, is more than just a benefit to us. It improves the quality of life for our residents, our family."

Pauline, who immigrated from Kenya in 2017, especially appreciates the time that the primary care team takes to explain instructions.

"Considering that English is my second language, they are keen to have me understand what they mean," says Pauline. "They are willing to listen to me when I ask a question. That means a lot to me and our residents."

"When people are loved, they love."

— Pauline Ngangira

Pauline's philosophy of care is simple yet potent: Love.

"We try to make our residents feel loved, appreciated, and don't look down on them. We live like a family, and we love each other," she says.

Just a few feet off the back porch where residents often share meals or activities on nice days, a small birdhouse sits at eye level. Each year the birds

(See "Love and care," Page 5)

New tool helps people recover better at home

Most people want to avoid a trip to the hospital, and Housecall Providers offers a monitoring tool to help keep them recovering at home.

Housecall Providers piloted a remote patient monitoring (RPM) system for eight months that providers can now request as part of a care plan.

A daily screening tool, such as RPM, has proven to significantly improve recovery after acute conditions or worsening chronic illness, and for those with high-risk factors or who need help following medication routines.

“The majority of the RPM systems have been given to patients who usually had complications from illnesses like COPD, diabetes and congestive heart failure,” says Primary Care Medical Director J.C. Provost. “They are at risk of being hospitalized or rehospitalized if symptoms can’t be stabilized.”

The RPM system equips providers with the tools to monitor patients through recovery in the comfort of their homes. Each day, patients receive reminders to take medications and to answer questions about their health, which they report on



Remote patient monitoring tools for home use.

a tablet provided with other equipment. Patients are also prompted to use their wireless biometric monitoring devices to record their blood pressure, weight, heart rate and blood oxygen levels.

The daily readings are reported to the patient’s care team in a green, yellow and a red alert format. Green means all is well; yellow signifies some attention is needed; and red requires immediate communication because a reading is out of the parameters.

“I love the concept of it and that my doctor knows immediately if I am having a problem,” says Sherrie Manzanli, one of the RPM pilot’s first users. “I live with lung problems and chronic heart failure, so it is important that they [care team] know what is going on. And, if I notice that my oxygen concentration is low, I just call the office.”

The survey questions can be tailored to include symptoms of depression if the care team is concerned about a patient’s

mental well-being or how they are responding to treatment.

“RPM is a short-term tool to assist patients in getting back to the health they had before the changes related to their current condition,” says Provost.

The tablet also offers educational videos and teach-back quizzes to help educate patients. ■

Love and care

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build a nest, and the residents get to watch the babies grow up and fly away. It is just one of the special touches that make The Ranch more like a family home than a care facility.

“Having care partners like Pauline is a true collaboration and helps us practice better medicine,” says Barb. “As health issues crop up, they are dealt with quickly before they can become serious, which puts less stress on the caregiver, care team and the patient.” ■

Seamless transition

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not only physical needs but emotional and spiritual ones.

“One of the things that Scott, our hospice chaplain, talked about was how hospice is such a gift for the family as well,” Susan says. “We didn’t have to worry about anything, and we could spend our time and energy just loving on and sharing time with mom while her other needs were being met. We knew that mom was totally under the umbrella of care and that was a huge relief for us.”

Regular visits from Myrtle’s hospice team, along with visits from family members armed with chocolates (COVID-19 visit restrictions were lifted for residents on hospice), bolstered her spirits and she began to put weight back on. After her second three-month review, Myrtle’s health improved so much that she was no longer certified for hospice.

Because Myrtle received both primary care and hospice services through Housecall Providers, her transition from one to the other and back again went smoothly. “I don’t know the inner workings of it, but it sure seemed to go fluidly,” Susan says.

Stories like this illustrate the side of hospice that few know or understand. Hospice isn’t just about dying, it is about improving quality of life so patients can make the most of the time they have. The right support at the right time makes all the difference to families who are struggling with the burden of care.

“To take over the responsibility of someone’s care, it feels daunting,” says Susan, “so having the support of primary care and hospice within one organization meant everything to me.” ■