

The United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley highlighted many of its funded services and agencies during the 1993 annual fundraising campaign. The YWCA's Adult Day Care Center was one such featured program. The following article appeared in The Morning Call on July 22, 1993. (Reprinted with permission from the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley.)

FORGET WHAT YOU KNOW

by A. W. Borger

They are often found in the living room late at night. Standing there. Afraid to move.

Lost in their own home. They are people with Alzheimer's disease.

Sons and daughters who looked up to strong parents and now reverse their roles and scramble, with other family members to take care of a Mom or a Dad who can't remember their names. Or where to find the bathroom. And when the pressure becomes too much they turn for help.

Sue Leathers, a volunteer at the Adult Day Care Center run by the Bethlehem YWCA, was living in Virginia when her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. To avoid putting her mother in an institution, Sue and her father returned to the Lehigh Valley to share the demands of her mother's care with relatives.

Thanks to the Bethlehem YWCA program, her mother spent the last year of her life among family and friends. "We adopted the center," Sue said, organizing parties at Christmas and Easter.

Adult day care provides a safe environment for elderly people who need more help with daily tasks than a senior center provides. Participants enjoy a range of planned activities. If you have been to summer camp, you are familiar with the routine.

But these elderly campers, some physically challenged and others mentally impaired, are trying to maintain or improve their level of functioning. The Center provides both personal care and reality orientation. A bulletin board reminds everyone, "Cloudy. Today is Wednesday, May 5, 1993. Spring."

Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative disorder of the brain cells. As short term memory is impaired, patients forget appointments and lose the ability to read or follow directions. With decreasing ability to use numbers, they can no longer balance a checkbook or play cards. A patient may become confused, disoriented, irritable and unable to concentrate. Eventually many are committed to an institution. If they are very determined and lucky, the family may find an adult day care center instead. "Alzheimer's disease is hitting a younger group or being diagnosed earlier these days," explained Jane Taney, program director. "Sometimes one spouse is dropped off for the day so the other can go to work."

The YWCA Adult Day Care Center is open daily and a nursing staff supplies general health monitoring. Most clients attend every day, but arrangements can be made in advance for drop-ins.

The Northampton County Council on the Aging pays for some daily participants. Others qualify on a sliding scale for scholarship money provided by the United Way. Other people in need of services have been identified, but more money is needed for them to participate.

The Adult Day Care Center is listed by United Way as a critical program. That means that more dollars could be allocated to the program if they were available. Unfortunately, they are not.

For more information on adult day care, call the Y at (610) 867-4660.



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