



Mary, Queen of Angels assisted living facility residents Paula Cagle, Peggy Benson, Blanca Arnold and Shirley Greenfield work on a project as part of the award winning Stepping Stones Program, which was designed to help therapy patients be integrated back into the assisted living community and declining residents to find new meaning and purpose through a structured environment.

Mary, Queen of Angels program wins Innovator of the Year Award

At the 2012 LeadingAge of Tennessee Conference, Mary, Queen of Angels Assisted Living facility was awarded The Innovator of the Year Award in recognition of the Stepping Stones program.

LeadingAge Tennessee is an association of communities and professionals providing quality housing, health, community and related services for the elderly.

The Stepping Stones program was implemented earlier in the year through the efforts of Mary, Queen of Angels Activities Department and therapy provider Innovative Senior Care to provide individual guidance for residents who have been on therapy or are declining and losing purpose. The goal of the program is to help therapy patients be integrated back into the assisted living community and declining residents to find new meaning and purpose through a structured environment.

Often, when residents complete therapy, they are still not at the comfort level as before therapy was needed and end up being less active, only to need therapy again. The Stepping Stones program offers individual attention aimed at preventing such a reversal.

Residents are referred to Stepping Stones by two staffers from nursing, activities, therapy, and/or the psychiatric evaluation team. Referrals may be made to Cognition/Memory, Low Vision,

Project Partners, Community Integration, Community Networking, Walking Club and Therapeutic Exercise groups. Each group provides high degrees of supervision and interaction.

As an example, residents who participate in Project Partners make baby quilts and blankets, which are donated to local hospitals. Teddy Bears are also sewn and given to local hospitals and police departments for children involved in domestic situations.

Puzzle Projects allow residents to make puzzles to be donated to children in hospitals and proves to be a favorite of both residents and the children choosing them. Finally, the scraps from the above projects are used to make puppy toys that are donated to the local animal humane association.

Each project gives the residents a sense of purpose and contribution to society, which is rejuvenating.

Melodie Van Wye, executive director of Mary Queen of Angels, stated that one of the unique things about the new program is that it was ever initiated in the first place. Normally, the first question asked about a new program is how much money it will generate, she said. The Stepping Stones program does not produce any additional revenue and is there purely for the benefit of the residents, she added, but, the value of the program is astronomical. ♣