A Lifetime of Achievement

Bonnie Franco’s desire to become a nurse began with an eighth grade book report. “I wrote about Clara Burton,” she recalls. “I studied the history of nursing. That’s when I thought I wanted to be a nurse.”

Her mother suggested she get a job at St. Francis Hospital to learn more about what nurses did. So, Bonnie went to work as a unit secretary at the hospital. There, she had the opportunity to shadow floor nurses. “I watched Gayla Ahlquist, who’s still at St. Francis, and Janet Culpepper. I loved watching what they did,” Bonnie says. “I knew right away that’s what I wanted to do.”

Thirty years later she’s still in nursing and still at St. Francis. Bonnie has worked as a bedside nurse, charge nurse and administrative director, serving in almost every department of the hospital under the leadership of five chief nursing officers and four CEOs. The organization has grown and changed, but one thing has never changed. “The vision for quality patient care has always aligned with my own,” explains Bonnie.

Debbie Saylor, senior vice president of patient care services, calls Bonnie a legacy leader for nursing. “She has a caring heart and intelligent mind that moves nursing forward,” says Debbie. “It’s very rare to see a nurse stay with one hospital. She’s a big part of why this hospital has the reputation for nursing excellence it has.”

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Cover Story:
Options for Senior America: Home Care and More

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FACT: Census figures indicate there has been an unprecedented increase in the senior population.

FACT: Men and women over age 65 make up 12% of the US population with 4.9 million being over 85 and 67,000 over 100 years of age.

FACT: Experts project that by 2050, 49% of the total populations will be seniors.

FACT: Medical advances have changed former “killer” diseases into chronic diseases that seniors can live with for years.

FACT: The huge Baby Boomer generation has entered the “senior demographic” and has needs and expectations for their retirement years.

FACT: Longevity has created the sandwich generation where adult children may be taking care of their own parents as they also parent the next generation.

FACT: Most seniors prefer to remain independent and in their own homes as long as possible.

FACT: Adult care giving with its complex health needs can take an enormous toll on families.

All of these indicators made the business mind of Ramzi Rihani, schooled in management and organizational behavior, click into motion when he and his partners launched Options for Senior America Corp., www.optionscorp.com a home health care organization, in 1989. Since then several branches in the states of Georgia, Maryland, Ohio, Virginia, Florida, and North Carolina serve hundreds of families a year, helping senior adults cope with the expediencies of everyday life in their own homes.

However, according to Rihani, President and CEO, it was the personal experience and privilege of caring for his own wheelchair bound mother, which put the signature care into the many services Options provides.

“Whether it be personal hygiene, transferring and ambulating, light housekeeping, meal planning and preparation, errands, companionship or medication reminders, Options caregivers deliver it as if the patient were a member of their own family,” Rihani explains.

To ensure that happens, all employees participate in supportive training sessions facilitating listening skills. Hearing and interpreting what family members are describing gives the staff an insightful and knowledgeable perspective when they suggest a course of care.

“Our pool of caregivers are screened via thorough background checks, face-to-face interviews and skills competency testing to allow us to make the best match—whether the client is looking for a skilled person, conversationalist or a low key quiet type — we work hard to meet their needs,” Rihani said.

Additionally, certified senior advisors on staff conduct sensitization training regarding elder care, and the company provides a Continuing Education Program offering different courses five times a year for all employees, recognizing that caregiving is a vocation that requires working both the mind and heart.

Services ranging from as little as 4 hours a day to 24/7 live-in care can be tailored to individual preferences. The knowledgeable and resourceful team at Options is available to conduct an in-home needs assessment at no charge and no commitment and follow that up with a delivery response timeframe unrivaled in the industry.

Now, after almost two decades of providing home health aides, Options has expanded its services to offer skilled nursing by hiring RNs in the geriatric field to care for clients including institutions such as hospitals and rehabilitation facilities.

Commenting on the service expansion Rihani said, “The climate of elder care either in a home setting or other institution can often present medical concerns regarding unique needs, limitations and strengths of seniors. This requires coordination among a variety of health care specialists, and now our service menu offers a comprehensive resources roster all in one place, to ease the coordination process for families.”