

COMMENTS (0)

Friday, October 18, 2013

In-home senior care trending in Fairfax County

Rising population, declining economy changing model, caregivers say

By Gregg MacDonald Staff Writer

Aging baby boomers and a lackluster economy are transforming the senior care model in Fairfax County, according to some health care agencies.

Three years ago, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, there were more than 55 million Americans age 65 and older nationwide. In the three years since, some represented in that age group have died, but according to health officials, the number of Americans who turned 65 during that same time period far outnumbers those who have died out of that demographic.

"There are 78 million baby boomers (individuals born between 1946 and 1964) who started to turn 65 last year, and many are moving demographically into the 65-to-85-year-old senior population," said Robert Massie, co-owner of senior home care agency BrightStar Care of Fairfax.

According to Massie, the large number of boomers entering that population is putting a strain on traditional senior care models and nursing home facilities, and boomers also are demanding that they be treated differently.

"The baby boomers have reshaped every demographic they have ever moved into, and this one is no different," Massie said. "It used to be that many seniors would retire, and eventually move into retirement communities until they

company also just received its Virginia license, so it can also begin serving the demand for in-home care in Northern Virginia.

"We are seeing more and more people staying in their homes due to financial, health and safety concerns," she said.

"Everything is changing right now, being led by our poor economy and an increasingly negative view of nursing homes as places where people go to die."



Shamus Ian Fatzinger/Fairfax County Times

Haregewyen Admasu, a caregiver with BrightStar Care of Fairfax, helps McLean resident Jean Frahm up from the couch in her home so she can go to a doctor's appointment on Wednesday.

needed to go into a nursing home. The aging boomers are now increasingly requesting that they be able to stay at home for as long as possible. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that it is about 30 to 40 percent less expensive, but studies have shown that people who stay at home also live longer and live better. It is a trend called 'aging in place,' and it is why my wife and I set up shop in Fairfax County. Demand here is tremendous"

According to Massie, a typical nursing home facility may cost somewhere between \$85,000 and \$90,000 a year, compared with \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year for in-home care.

Sue Rogers, a registered nurse and president of Capital City Nurses in Bethesda, Md., said her in-home care

But Massie said in-home care is not for everyone.

"It is a matter of choice," he said. "For some, being in their own home, in their own neighborhood with their own neighbors and the area they know best is what they want, but for others, it may be preferable to be housed somewhere where there are more people their own age, and activities set up for them on a daily basis. But the sheer numbers of seniors entering the population is going to mean that not everyone will be able to reside in a traditional nursing home, even if that is what they want to do."

Rogers agrees it ultimately is a choice, but sees a different issue also emerging.

"First and foremost it is personal preference," she said. "But some people who may want to age in place in their own homes may not be able to do so because of several factors. The home may not be safe due to its layout or the stairs, and also the neighborhood they moved into decades ago may have changed and no longer be a safe environment for them."

Massie says the important thing is that today seniors have more options than ever before.

"Now they have a choice," he said. "Twenty years ago, they didn't. They had to move when they required continuing care. Today, they have many more options open to them."