

## JEAN ADAMS AGES IN PLACE WITH HELP FROM THE PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANT PROGRAM

*"It's just like a gift from heaven"*

*Jean Adams has had severe rheumatoid arthritis in her whole body for over 25 years. Shown here at her home in the North Quabbin, Jean maintains her independence with assistance through the Personal Care Attendant Program at LifePath, which helps her to age in place.*

Jean Adams spent most of her life working. "I worked 46 years of my life and I'm 76," says Jean. "My parents always felt that we needed to know what it was like to earn money. So at 12 years old, I got a summer job washing milk bottles on a farm, 75 cents an hour. That was hard work, you know?"

That first job was in Winchester, New Hampshire, during the 1950s. The next job was "for a well-to-do lady," says Jean. "She wanted us to do her housekeeping. We learned all the proper ways of doing things."

A couple years later, the family moved to Brattleboro, Vermont. "In the summer I worked for Estey Organ," says Jean. "I had to get a permission from the state of Vermont, because I wasn't 16, to work. I wired resistor boards in the organs. I can remember that to this day."

In her 20s, Jean moved to Massachusetts. "I've been in Athol and Orange over 50 years," she says. During that time, she took a job working as a housekeeper for a local celebrity.

Jean married, cared for her late husband when he fell ill, cared for both sets of her grandparents, and took care of her father. "My mom I had to put in a nursing home because she did get Alzheimer's," says Jean. "I tried after my first husband died to bring her home. And it's a funny thing, because she came to enough to say, 'Bring me back to the nursing home. That's where I need to be.' And that helped me, because I had always vowed I'd never put my mom in a nursing home."

Then, in 1992, Jean got sick. "I've had severe rheumatoid arthritis in my whole body," says Jean. Jean continued on working for many years until one day she felt like she could no longer fulfill her job duties. That was about 15 years ago. "I thought when my first husband died that I was going to be fine. But money goes like a flash in the night, with the medical bills and whatnot." Since she retired, she has continued to support herself with social security. "I continually get more frail and other problems."

Jean's second husband passed away five years ago. At that time, she had still been driving her own car. "My eyes are bad," says Jean, "and one day I went to the doctors in Greenfield, drove myself, and I got to the first exit. I did not see the [cones]. Well, the police came behind me blowing



their horns, lights flashing, and stopped me. Of course I apologized profusely, but I realized what danger could have been to the workmen that were down there. So I came home after my appointment, parked my car, put a sign in it, and sold it that day. I wasn't going to go out of this world killing somebody."

Around this time, Jean went to the laundromat in Athol. "I was endeavoring to put my clothes into the dryer and put the money in the dryer," says Jean, "and this gentleman come over to me and said, 'May I help you? I see you're having difficulty seeing.'"

The man helped her out with her laundry and suggested that she look into a Senior Care Options plan, or "SCO," a comprehensive health plan for seniors through a Medicare-Medicaid partnership that combines health services with social support services. Jean is now one of more than 350 participants served this past year through the SCO and One Care care coordination at LifePath.

"I cannot even comprehend [what] they've been doing for me," says Jean. "It's just like a gift from heaven. Every individual that has helped me has been the kindest, most sincerely caring that I have ever dealt with in the medical field."

Through LifePath, Jean qualifies for and is enrolled in the Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Program. To qualify for the PCA Program, a person must require physical assistance in two areas of their daily life, such as:

- mobility and transfers
- medication assistance
- bathing and grooming
- dressing and undressing
- toileting
- feeding

A PCA Program skills trainer provides qualifying individuals with orientation to the program and requests a doctor's referral. People who are able to hire and manage their own PCAs are supported to do so; those who need assistance can

have a surrogate appointed. PCAs are paid with funding through MassHealth. Types of assistance can include bathing, dressing, homemaking, laundry, shopping, meal preparation, and medical transportation, as needed.

"I have two personal care attendants (PCAs)," says Jean. "One cooks, that's Mary, and the other, her name is Marie. Both are outstanding, dedicated workers, and I'm very, very grateful."

Jean says that Mary is a fabulous cook. "She's clean, she's neat, she's efficient. She leaves my kitchen like nobody was there when she's done, and she will cook anything that I ask her to cook. Everything's from scratch, and I like that. I usually have her cook for two days, because I'm not supposed to be around the stove. See these hands? I drop everything, easily burnt, which I have done. And I spill things and make a mess and can't deal with that."

Likewise, Marie has been there for Jean in a variety of ways. A few months ago, while out shopping together for sheets to fit a new hospital bed, Jean had a health crisis. Marie took her to Athol Hospital and stayed with her until she was transferred to Baystate that evening.

After many years of caring for others, Jean is grateful to feel "really cared for" now by Mary, Marie, and the LifePath case managers, skills trainers, and nurses who have helped her. "I've had such an attachment," she says of the people she's spoken with from LifePath. "They call on the phone. They keep good track of you! All of them, they are just so sweet and caring, and they seem genuinely so. It doesn't seem like it's a facade; it just seems genuine. And that makes you feel so good."

*To learn more about how services from LifePath could support you or a loved one, reach out by phone to 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 or email [info@lifepathma.org](mailto:info@lifepathma.org). Read more stories and find resource information online at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).*



*As a personal care attendant, Mary prepares meals for Jean. On this particular day, Mary was cooking a shepherd's pie and some molasses muffins at Jean's request. "She's making some garlic bread to go with my shepherd's pie," says Jean, "and that will be her day today. Then she'll clean up afterwards. I insist my kitchen is clean, and she does that."*

## SHINE: SERVING THE HEALTH INSURANCE NEEDS OF EVERYONE MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT IS OPEN AND ENDS ON DECEMBER 7

by Lorraine York-Edberg, Western Mass. Regional SHINE Program Director



If you have a Medicare, sometime during the month of September you should have received important information known as an Annual Notice of Change from your Prescription Drug Plan or your Medicare Advantage Plan HMO (Health Maintenance Organization) or PPO (Preferred Provider Organization). The mailing explains any changes to your plan in the coming year regarding premiums, drug coverage changes (formulary), providers, and restrictions. It is **very important** to review the information to make sure the plan still works for you.

Starting October 15 through December 7, you can join, drop, or change your insurance, and the new coverage will begin on January 1, 2019. I like to call this time of year “Your Annual Insurance Checkup,” because it is a time when you can evaluate your current plan and decide if you want to make changes. If your current plan continues to meet your needs, then you may want to keep it. It is also a time when you may want to shop around for a new plan to help you save money, decrease or increase coverage.

Important things to consider when reviewing your plan changes are:

- Does it still cover all your medications?
- Are there any restrictions on your medication like quantity limits, prior authorization or step therapy that would make it difficult to access your needed medications?
- Did you get a letter from your Medicare Prescription Drug Plan that your plan is changing or is no longer available in Massachusetts?
- Have you been reassigned to a new plan? If so, contact the new plan to assure it will cover your current medications. If not, you should join a new plan before December 7, 2018, to access the medications you need without any problems.
- Would you like to join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan or Medicare Advantage Prescription Plan? Because [JR1] you’ve never joined previously, you can do it during this time.

### Review and save all letters from your plan!

During the Medicare Open Enrollment (**October 15 - December 7**), you will have an opportunity to **CHANGE** your coverage for next year. You can decide to stay in Original Medicare or join a Medicare Advantage Plan. If you are already in a Medicare Advantage Plan, you can use the Open Enrollment to

switch back to Original Medicare with a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. State-certified SHINE (Medicare) counselors can help you understand your plan changes, as well as other options you may have. **Call early to get a SHINE appointment (1-800-498-4232) during Open Enrollment!**

### Ways to get the help you need:

- Visit [www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan](http://www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan) to use the Medicare Plan Finder.
- Look at your most recent “Medicare and You” handbook to see plans in your area; 2019 books will be mailed late September.
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) and say, “Agent.” Help is available 24 hours a day, including weekends.
- Contact your local SHINE Program.
- Attend a local presentation regarding the annual Open Enrollment period.

*The SHINE program, Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone, provides confidential, and unbiased health insurance counseling for Medicare beneficiaries. This is a free service, though contributions are welcome and will go a long way to help support this vital program. For further assistance with any Medicare issue, you can make a SHINE appointment. To reach a trained and certified counselor in your area, contact the regional office at 1-800-498-4232 or 413-773-5555, or contact your local council on aging.*



## OFFERING HELP AROUND THE HOLIDAYS

Thanksgiving is just around the bend. Whether you’re gathering everyone together in your own home or traveling to another town to enjoy dinner at a loved one’s table, we at LifePath wish you a day full of thanks and fellowship.

Holidays are times that bring family and friends together. Often, face to face, we can see that people we love could use a hand. Our programs and services help many people in many ways: elders can stay in their homes for as long as possible; caregivers can get support and even be paid for the work they do; persons with disabilities can get assistance to live as independently as possible.

If you’re in town visiting a loved one this week, know that we’re here to help. The Information & Caregiver Resource



When families come together for the holidays, we sometimes notice changes in our relatives that show us they could use a hand. If you need someone to turn to, LifePath is here to help. Reach us at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 or online at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).

Center is available to answer your specific questions and help you find out where to begin. Everyone’s needs are so unique that the best way to see how we can help is to talk with one of our resource consultants. Call 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 during normal business hours or email [info@LifePathMA.org](mailto:info@LifePathMA.org) anytime.

If you use social media, you can stay in touch and up-to-date no matter where your travels take you. “Like” us on Facebook – we’re located at [www.facebook.com/LifePathMA](http://www.facebook.com/LifePathMA). You can also sign up to receive an emailed version of The Good Life at [LifePathMA.org/news/goodlife](http://LifePathMA.org/news/goodlife).

Read more about all of our services and programs at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).

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—Alan Coutinho, Volunteer Meals on Wheels Driver

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