

Double Platinum

It's early morning when Lisa Jenkins pulls in front of The Legacy, a lovely building which stands out in Pittsburgh's Hill district. Suddenly a large man approaches the car. His face is partially concealed by his hooded sweatshirt. Jenkins pops out of the car, as keen as a kindergarten teacher on the first day of school.

"Can I help you?"

The man says, "I was told to see you because my kids' mother is gone. I have no food for these kids. They said you could help me."

She can. Jenkins has been working out of The Legacy since 2007 and has become a trusted resource in the Hill. Her work is sponsored by LIFE Pittsburgh, a community based alternative to nursing home care. Through the LIFE Pittsburgh program, frail older adults can remain in their own home and receive a coordinated plan of care that enables them to maintain their independence and enjoy a safe and active life in the community.

Jenkins has just garnered her second *PAHMA Platinum Award for Excellence in Resident Services*. Named on the award is The Legacy, and the building's management, McCormack Baron Ragan.

Jenkins has her MSW, but she says her greatest qualifications come from the PACE training she's received at LIFE Pittsburgh. She spends 20 hours per week at The Legacy, introducing and running programs to create strong and lasting improvements in the residents' quality of life, helping the residents to continue to live independently and preserving the sense of community within the building.

These goals are met through activities that have been carefully thought out to include an emphasis on the residents' physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and/or social health. Efforts to meet these goals are also made through one-on-one contact between Jenkins and the residents.

Besides an initial and annual assessment, she makes an effort to have contact with each resident either in person or by phone every other week. This allows her to be familiar with every resident as an individual and keep on top of his/her needs. It is the combination of programming and individual contact that creates a sense of trust and partnership, allowing The Legacy to meet its goals and provide excellent Resident Services.

Jenkins' programs center on education in the areas of fitness, food, financial freedom, fun with family and friends, and faith.

ry muffins, yogurt parfaits with blueberries and smoothies. Residents were also provided with healthy blueberry recipes.



Laura Ferguson and Lisa Jenkins enjoy each others company while in the Activity Room at the Legacy Apartments.

Financial: Several community partnerships developed within this past year have also helped The Legacy residents to achieve the buildings' goals by learning about *Financial Freedom*. Staff from the local Fifth Third Bank have offered group education classes in the building and also work one-on-one with residents. Jenkins, in collaboration with the Bank, has several success stories. For example, two residents who had been bouncing checks and overdrawing their accounts on a routine basis have both been maintaining a positive balance for five months. Another resident was able to save up enough money to return her TV to Rent-a-Center and purchase her own. The Legacy has partnered with the PA Department of Health, PA Bureau of Drug and Alcohol and New Hope United Methodist Church to include The Legacy's residents in a program entitled *Rivers Safety Course*, an education class about the risks of gambling. With increased opportunities to gamble, Jenkins worked with several residents who have experienced difficulties such as overdrawn bank accounts or being stranded at the casino because they gambled away their transportation money.

Fun: It may sound crass, but when Jenkins pulls out the *Corn Hole* game and the lobby fills with laughter, residents aren't thinking about their arthritis pain or the fact that they have to use a walker or that they are getting a good workout. Instead, they are focused on having fun. When residents are gathered at a *Lunch and Learn* event and are discussing a serious issue, they aren't focused on giving their brain a good workout; instead, they are focused on being with their Legacy family and friends. An on-going atmosphere of fun allows The Legacy to preserve the sense of community within the building.

Faith and Trust: The Hill is a place where promises are routinely broken and people are often left to their own devices. To combat the feeling of disappointment and mistrust, Jenkins has worked hard to develop close trusting relationships with the residents. One resident told her, "Before when I would have a problem, I would go up to my apartment and hit the bottle. Now, I come and see you." Because the residents have faith in their Resource Coordinator, she is able to connect them with community-based programs enabling them to maintain an independent life in their own home.

So, when someone like the man in the hooded sweatshirt comes to Jenkins, she knows she has to deliver - whether or not he actually resides at The Legacy. Fortunately, she happened to have some food on hand. She also maintains a list of local resources that can help provide longer term assistance for just such emergencies.

The Legacy's residents illustrated their sense of community when they threw a surprise birthday party for Jenkins. Having worked on it secretly for months, they caught her by complete surprise. She arrived at work to find the lobby decorated with balloons and banners, counters overflowing with homemade food, two huge cakes, and over half of the building's 110 residents. This expression of love and trust by the residents illustrates the success Jenkins has had in bringing together the individual strengths, skills, and abilities and creating a united family.

Proper care in the community is a lot more than just making sure people take their pills and have their basic needs met. The healthiest are those who have both a sense of independence and a sense of community—of making a difference. Lisa Jenkins is the very embodiment of LIFE Pittsburgh's mission of assisting older adults in maintaining quality, dignity and autonomy in their lives. †



Brenda Adair and Lisa Jenkins.

Fitness: A lot of emphasis is placed on giving the residents the opportunity to stay physically active, which in turns enables them to have a higher quality of life and remain as independent as possible. For example, every Tuesday morning residents gather in the Billiard Room for an exercise class. Classes vary from Tai Chi to an exercise DVD from the Arthritis Foundation. Other opportunities include participation in the Presidential Active Lifestyle Challenge (six residents achieved the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award this past year), the 12 Days of Christmas Health Challenge and The Legacy Wii Bowling League.

Food: On a quarterly basis, Diane Ferchak, a registered dietician from LIFE Pittsburgh, comes to The Legacy for *Date with a Dietician*. A favorite program from this year was Diane's Microwave Cooking Class. Emphasis has also been placed on helping the residents to utilize the food they receive from The Legacy's monthly Food Pantry sponsored by the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. For example, when the residents received large bags of blueberries, the refreshments at the next morning coffee included blueber-