For men and women who require frequent medical attention, it can be difficult to find the correct balance between receiving the care they require and maintaining their personal freedoms and lifestyle.

Perham resident Marian Underhill finds that her apartment in St. James Manor, along with the home care and assisted living services she receives from Perham Living Home Care, help her strike that balance. She’s spent the last seven years living in St. James Manor, where seniors age 62 and older and people with disabilities are offered apartment-style living.

Although she’s feeling well now, Marian was admitted to the hospital three different times during the past year for congestive heart failure and cellulitis in her leg. She is also a diabetic. In the past, she’s spent several weeks in Transitions, Perham Living’s rehabilitation center, until she recovered to the point where she could live on her own again at St. James Manor.

The apartment complex is located on the Perham Living campus and is within a convenient distance to area churches, restaurants, and retail stores. “I am pretty much free to go places if I want to go anywhere,” Marian says. “Although since I’ve been on oxygen I do have to have someone go with me now.”

Over the past few years, Marian has enjoyed spending time at the senior center and playing bingo at the VFW and The Cactus. “My son picks me up on Sundays and we go to church together and get lunch afterwards,” she says of a favorite weekly ritual.

Stephanie McGee RN, Perham Living Home Care clinical coordinator (l), and resident assistant Marlys Bachmann assist Marian Underhill as she makes her way down the hallway toward the community dining area at St. James Manor. Over the past seven years, Marian has developed strong relationships with both staff members and her fellow tenants.
Perham Living Home Care delivers high-quality care in the comfort of a person’s home. The highly skilled team of health professionals is committed to including patients and their families as an integral part of the care team. Services are tailored to meet the individual needs of each patient.

Services are provided by registered nurses, therapists, social workers, and home health aides. Perham Living Home Care provides these services in Otter Tail, Wadena, and Becker Counties. In addition to St. James Manor, assisted living services are available at Briarwood apartments also located on the Perham Living campus.

“If they need help, I would tell people that home care and assisted living services are a great thing to have. The staff takes really good care of you,” Marian mentions. “They make sure I’m able to get dressed for the day and get ready for bed. They also do my laundry for me once a week, help with baths, and assist with cleaning the apartment.”

Having the staff check in on her throughout the day has become a welcome part of Marian’s daily routine. Even though she gets playfully scolded for not wearing her oxygen all of the time, Marian says she dishes out the humor even stronger in return.

“I pick on the nurses. I pick on the doctors. If I didn’t, they’d think something was wrong. I’ve been that way ever since I can remember,” Marian says, adding how much she likes to make them laugh. “I figure if they can put up with me then I can put up with them.”

Stephanie McGee, Clinical Coordinator of Assisted Living, mentions how Marian is a client who historically has been in and out of the clinic and hospital many times. “Since she has been on services she is managing her medical conditions very well, doing daily recording of values as instructed by her doctor. It is always great to review the values and see that they are in the desired ranges. I am her cheerleader, giving her a ‘woo-hoo!’ and a high five. Her face lights up and she smiles and ‘woo-hoos!’ back. She always has a good sense of humor and is a real joy to work with,” McGee reports.

These types of friendships are frequently developed between staff members and the men and women utilizing Perham Living’s home care and assisted living services. “Helping people, seeing them smile, and sharing a laugh is the most rewarding part of my job,” comments Margene Olson, who works as a resident assistant in the assisted living program.

A sense of camaraderie is also formed between tenants who live at St. James Manor. Many of the tenants enjoy eating meals together in the community dining area. “We love to go to the community room and play bingo together. We have meetings in there where we all talk,” Marian says of some of her favorite times spent with the friends she’s made over the past seven years.

“The most rewarding parts of my job are seeing people age in place and be able to reside in their home while maintaining health and wellness with the assistance that they need,” comments McGee. “The other rewarding part is seeing clients not only maintain in their current environment but also improve in their health status and increase independence with the addition of assisted living services. I am very proud of the staff and the response from the clients we serve.”

In Marian’s opinion, it is the attention to the small things that make the home care and assisted living staff members who work with her so special. “They’ll help me with things if I ask them, even if it’s not a part of their job,” she says, grateful for the excellent care she receives in the comfort of her own home. “At Christmas time, they even help me set up my little tree.”
After her leg was amputated last year, Anne Horstmann now relies on a wheelchair to keep her mobile. Selecting the correct chair and managing the paperwork that comes with a rental can be quite a burden. Fortunately, Horstmann turned to Perham Health’s medical accessories department to help her with these tasks and make her transition to the wheelchair as convenient as possible.

“I’ve rented two wheelchairs since the medical accessories department opened in the new hospital,” Horstmann says. “I’ve bought shoes for my husband here as well.”

The department is located inside the pharmacy, on the left side of the hospital atrium as you enter through the main doors. The retail and rental hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

In addition to a wide range of durable medical equipment, the department also handles custom orders. “Medical equipment is for everyone,” explains Medical Accessories manager Evie King. “There are lots of practical items people can use. People are amazed when they realize the wide variety of products that are available to them. They often stop back in to let us know how much these products are improving their lives.”

Some of the most appreciated products are the continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machines. King says they’ve had several patients return to comment how they feel rested and clear headed following a good night’s sleep thanks to these respiratory devices. Mobility products such as wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, and canes are also frequently requested.

Thanks to Perham Health’s partnership with Sanford Medical Equipment, hospital beds, oxygen, and customized wheelchairs and seating are also available. Although these select products are distributed out of Fargo, Perham Health staff members work with local residents to help set up the equipment and answer questions.

“The staff members are wonderful,” Horstmann says of her experience with the medical accessories department. “They are very good here. Any time I have problems they always take care of me right away.”

In addition to making sure each person has the specialized health equipment he or she needs, department staff members assist customers whenever possible with submitting their insurance claims. Billing specialist Janell Bernstetter says she makes sure to take the time to explain billing information in detail so people know exactly how much the equipment will cost.

Keeping people informed about costs and the variety of medical equipment available to them in Perham translates into satisfied customers. “Helping people and seeing a smile on their face is the most rewarding part of my job,” comments Bernstetter.

Health equipment available through Perham Health

- CPAP
- Nebulizers
- Wheelchairs
- Scooters
- Walkers
- Canes
- Breast pumps
- Diabetic shoes
- Hospital beds
- Lift chairs
- Orthotics
- Oxygen
- Bathroom and shower safety products

Ashley Rapatt and her daughter, 15-month-old Paisley, are another example of some of the customers served by the medical accessories department. When Paisley was four months old, she was diagnosed with respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), a major cause of respiratory illness in young children.

"Her doctors wanted Paisley to get a nebulizer to help her breathe better," Ashley Rapatt explains. Although her daughter initially used the nebulizer twice a day, she’s now improved to the point where she only uses it on occasion when she comes down with a bad cold. In addition to the joy of watching her daughter’s breathing improve with the aid of the device, Rapatt says she is always impressed with the excellent service provided by the staff.

“We are a resource,” King summarizes. “We are always adding new products and helping people find anything we do not have. It is so great to be able to help people stay independent in their own environment at home.”
The New Perham Health Is Celebrating One Year
And We Have You To Thank

It’s been a great year at Perham Health. We’ve seen growth, we’ve grown stronger, and we want to say thank you.

Thank you to our inspiring patients, to the community, and to everyone who has lent a helping hand along the way.

Because of the support we’ve received, we can continue to deliver the best possible care, each and every day. So once again from all of us at Perham Health, thank you!