

Participants and caregivers benefit from adult day services

"With the type of dementia Jim has, it was becoming extremely difficult for me to take care of him 24/7," recalls Pat Holper.

After her husband was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia and cognitive impairment, Pat attended an open house to learn more about the Adult Day Services (ADS) program on the Perham Living campus. The ADS program allows caregivers to drop off a loved one during regular work hours on weekdays. Participants in the program engage in a variety of activities – everything from baking treats in the ADS center's kitchen to participating in community events.

Although it was understandably a difficult choice, Pat says she knew the program would be beneficial for both Jim and herself. "The first time bringing him here was a struggle," she acknowledges. "That first day was a very hard day. I knew it was the right thing to do, but it was still hard."

It didn't take long, however, for Pat to recognize that her husband was truly enjoying the opportunities being provided for him at ADS. "When he gets excited, he starts talking," she explains. "When I would pick him up from Adult Day Services, he would talk and talk all the

way home. This let me know that he had a good time."

Mary Karkela says she had a similar experience when making the decision to enroll her husband, Terry, in the program a year and a half ago. "Everybody has their own story," she comments. "The first time I came here I sat down, cried, and said, 'He's not ready.' That was January. Terry started coming here in February."

Thankfully, she also quickly noticed how much her husband enjoyed his time at ADS. Mary says he enjoyed it right from the start. She says it is always fun hearing about what they do every day, whether it is playing a new game, listening to music, assisting with

the Meals on Wheels program, or attending a church service. "Terry is very happy and content coming here. He even misses it on the weekends," she says.

Having the Adult Day Services program available in Perham made it possible for Mary to continue her job as a teacher. If it weren't for ADS, she says she would have had to retire. Knowing her husband is being well taken care of in a safe and fun environment gives her the time and peace of mind to continue working.

In addition to meeting the daily needs of program participants like Jim Holper and Terry Karkela, ADS provides an important break for their loved ones.

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Perham's Adult Day Services program provides caregivers with an opportunity to take a break from the challenging task of caring for a loved one with health limitations. Program participants and their caregivers agree that the tight-knit group now feels more like family. Pictured, left to right, are Mary Karkela, Terry Karkela, Dianne Rohde-Szarke, Jim Szarke, Adult Day Services Coordinator Janet Severson, Pat Holper, Jim Holper, and Richard Curtis.



Terry Karkela, Ruth Moengen, and Jim Szarke volunteer by delivering Meals on Wheels at St. James Manor during part of their time spent at Adult Day Services on Wednesdays.

It can be extremely challenging attempting to meet all the needs of a loved one with health limitations.

Janet Severson, Adult Day Services coordinator, explains that she has been involved with the program since helping establish it in April 2015. "Nobody can be a caregiver 24/7 without help. We make it possible for people to go get lunch with a friend or get their hair done. Having this time away is mentally beneficial for caregivers."

Janet says people have a tendency to wait too long before bringing their loved ones to Adult Day Services. "It can be easy to wait until you feel you've reached the end of your rope," she says. "Please consider seeking help before you reach that point. We offer a free, no-obligation trial day so people can see how well the program works for their loved one."

There are currently 14 participants enrolled in Perham's ADS program on the Perham Living campus. Program hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Flexible scheduling means participants can come when it is convenient for them and their caregivers. Janet says participants typically come for a six-hour day. In addition to a day full of socialization and engaging activities, participants are provided a complete noon

meal and morning and afternoon snacks.

One of the main benefits of the ADS program is how it helps participants maintain their independence. Having this service available locally means the men and women involved in the program can remain in their homes longer while receiving the care they require. There is always a nurse available during program hours, and all participants have their vitals checked each month to monitor their health.

Richard Curtis first connected with ADS through Otter Tail County Human Services. A social worker referred him to the program due to health reasons. "By being here, I am more active than I was before," Richard says. "They do an excellent job keeping us active and challenged. For me, this helps keep me distracted from other problems."

Janet explains how the ADS program has helped Richard with his depression and the pain he experiences. He has formed friendships with the other participants and enjoys surprising them with gifts like a piece of fruit or a freshly baked pie.

In addition to engaging in activities for their entertainment value, Richard spends time on the center's computer to help strengthen the right side of his body. Playing chess on the computer has improved the function of his right hand and arm that were affected

by multiple strokes. Janet will also help Richard with daily tasks like making phone calls, ordering clothes, and setting up appointments.

"This is my heart," she says. "I feel privileged to have been able to help start this program. Being able to make someone's day better is what gets me here every morning. I know we are making a difference."

This desire to make a difference extends beyond just caring for the ADS participants and also includes their caregivers. "Janet gives us such great support," Mary Karkela notes. "There is this feeling of everybody understanding what we are going through. I feel so fortunate to have this program."

For the past three years, Adult Day Services has also offered a caregivers support group facilitated by Janet. The group meets the last Tuesday of every month from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at the ADS center. It is open to all caregivers and attracts people from many neighboring communities as well as the Perham area.

In the support group, caregivers are provided an opportunity to share with others who are experiencing the same joys and challenges that caregivers often face, to problem-solve difficult situations, to develop new ways to cope with the demands of caregiving, to give and receive encouragement, and to be empowered and strengthened as a caregiver.

"Just sitting in the group, talking, and noticing how everyone nods in understanding – that gives me confidence that I can deal with the things other people are already dealing with," Pat Holper says.

"I go home from the caregivers support group feeling like I'm not the only one in this situation," confirms Dianne Rohde-Szarke,

What Adult Day Services means to me

Adult Day is a place to come to and get me out of the house. I get to do things for others – sometimes just make them smile.

I get to bake for everyone and set up parties for everyone who is a part of Adult Day. I get to decorate the inside of Adult Day which I enjoy very much. I love learning new craft ideas and making them.

I love the workers – they are very kind people. Janet is my favorite because it was just her when I first started.

-Ruth Moengen

whose husband, Jim, is also affected by memory issues.

Dianne first learned about the Adult Day Services program in Perham when she came to a caregivers support group meeting. She works part-time in Fergus Falls, and has been able to continue working as her husband now participates in the ADS program a few days a week. "It's a wonderful break," she comments. "Jim likes to come to Adult Day Services. He's always ready to get dressed and come here. It's such a plus that they keep him busy and occupied. I think he gets a little bored at home."

Having the ADS center located on the Perham Living campus means there is always something new and exciting going on. ADS staff plan different intergenerational exchanges within the Perham Living community. Participants also spend time out in the community attending turtle races, riding the trolley around town, and visiting the local movie theater. Other examples of outings include riding on a pontoon, exploring some of our area state parks, fishing, and visiting Finn Creek. "We get out into the community any chance we get," Janet says. "We also try to help with different community events when we can."

"I like what we do during the day," Terry Karkela says. "On Wednesdays, I enjoy helping deliver Meals on Wheels."

In addition to serving the community, ADS participants form strong bonds with one another and with the staff. "The staff here is unbelievably professional and caring. I feel confident bringing my husband here because I can see how professional, patient, and kind the staff members are," Pat Holper comments.

The caregivers say they appreciate how ADS staff take time to share feedback about the day including what their loved ones ate for lunch, activities they participated in, and how they did that day. Mary Karkela mentions how, "It's really myself and Janet who see Terry the most. I like that I can ask her questions about how she thinks he's doing. It's so nice to have another person who is there like that."

"It's also so good to see how well the guys care for each other," Dianne Rohde-Szarke adds. "When you walk through the door, it feels like family."

Refreshing remodel underway at Perham Living

This spring, work began on a large-scale remodel project at Perham Living. The refresh project is repairing wear and damage to the building, which was last remodeled in 2006. Since then, 96 residents and approximately 150 staff have occupied the building every day.

The project is largely focused on updating and refreshing finishes, such as flooring, paint, fixtures, and furniture; all elements to improve the environment for those who call Perham Living "home."

Household kitchens are also being totally updated.

The remodel has been completed in three of the six households, with work on the remaining households scheduled to be completed summer of 2020.





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◀ **Dr. Regulagadda** practices nephrology, evaluating and treating patients with kidney problems and hypertension. He received his medical degree from Sri Venkateswara University, India; and completed his internal medicine residency and nephrology fellowships at State University of New York at Buffalo, NY.

▶ **Dr. Albrecht** specializes in vascular surgery for preventing strokes, repairing vessels in the arms and legs (including varicose veins), and repairing aneurysms. He received his medical degree from the University of Health Science in Kansas City, MO; completed his residency in general surgery and internship in internal medicine at Botsford General Hospital in Farmington, MI; and completed his fellowship in vascular surgery at Deborah Heart and Lung in Browns Mills, NJ.

Call (218) 347-1200 to make an appointment with Dr. Regulagadda at the Perham Health Clinic.

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