

Aging in Place in the Triad: Community Housing Solutions

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At 88 years old, Ms. Lucille Reynolds has lived in her home for more than half her life. In August of 2020, she suffered a stroke and was hospitalized. The hospital social workers referred Ms. Reynolds to Community Housing Solutions (CHS) for its Aging Gracefully program in hopes she would be able to return home and continue living on her own again. CHS is a small, local nonprofit construction company whose construction team members are Certified Aging-in-Place Specialists (CAPS) experienced in assessing and designing home modifications and solutions to address accessibility, aging-in-place, and universal design features and needs.

Ms. Reynolds met with a Triad HealthCare Network registered nurse (RN) and a Cone Health occupational therapist (OT) in the comforts of her own home for home assessments, health education, and training. Together, they set goals to help Ms. Reynolds stay safe and continue to age in the place she has called home for 48 years.

With input from the CHS construction leader, the OT compiled a list of repairs and accessibility modifications needed to make Ms. Reynolds' home a safer place to live following her stroke. CHS installed bathroom grab bars, replaced her uneven kitchen flooring, and installed an outside handrail. In addition to training her on the proper use of these new installations, the OT also worked with Ms. Reynolds to make some changes to her daily tasks, teaching her safer ways to move around her home, particularly in the kitchen and the laundry room.

"I am thankful to be able to stay in my home," said Ms. Reynolds. "Thanks to Community Housing Solutions and the Aging Gracefully program, I feel blessed, grateful, and very secure in my home" [1].

Aging Gracefully in Place

CHS completed the Aging Gracefully two-year demonstration project with the National Center for Healthy Housing in 2017, utilizing the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing's CAPABLE Model [2]. With partners from Cone Health and Triad HealthCare Network, elderly participants in this program received visits from registered nurses and occupational therapists along with necessary home modifications. Through this project, CHS and its partners served 44 elderly adults and saw substantial improvements in physical and mental outcomes between 2017 and 2018.

CHS, Cone Health, and Triad HealthCare Network have extended this partnership beyond the demonstration period to continue to serve low-income Guilford County

homeowners over age 65 with this evidence-based, multidisciplinary intervention—homeowners like Ms. Lucille Reynolds. In this holistic program, each client works with a team to reach client-set functional goals, with up to 12 visits in their own home over a five-month period. The goal of the Aging Gracefully program is to increase the older adult's mobility, functionality, and quality of life.

The Aging Gracefully program provides: 4-6 OT sessions; 3-5 RN sessions; home repairs and accessibility modifications completed by CHS to achieve client goals; and durable medical and assistive equipment as needed to meet goals.

Recent data about this program collected through Cone Health's EPIC system shows: 87% of participants reported having problems with bathing during the initial assessment, reduced to 5% after the nine-month post-program evaluation; 55% of participants reported issues with using the toilet during the initial assessment, reduced to 3%; 60% of participants reported trouble with walking across the room in the initial assessment, reduced to 2%; 73% of participants reported safety issues with bathing during the initial evaluation for the program, reduced to 5% after the nine-month: post program evaluation (unpublished data, Cone Health EPIC, 2022). In addition, falls decreased by 80% for clients completing the Aging Gracefully program. CHS and Cone Health look to expand the Aging Gracefully program in Greensboro and High Point to positively impact more low-income, elderly residents by improving physical function for activities of daily living, quality of life, mental health, and home safety. NCMJ

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Acknowledgments

Disclosure of interests. Parts of Ms. Reynolds' story previously appeared at CHSHousing.org. No further interests were disclosed.

References

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