

# Mid-Atlantic Sister Serves Elderly at Mercy LIFE

When Sister Anne Wootten's mother died at 62 after suffering from Alzheimer's disease, her death inspired Sister Anne to pursue geriatric nursing, a field she has worked in for 30 years.

A geriatric nurse practitioner, Sister Anne currently serves elderly clients at Mercy LIFE (Living Independently for Elders) center in North Philadelphia. Mercy LIFE helps people over age 55 with medical problems live independently at home instead of in a nursing home. Mercy LIFE clients come to the center for meals, social activities and to receive medical care.

"We really become their primary care provider," Sister Anne says. "We give them medications they need and provide transportation to appointments with medical specialists." The LIFE center also helps clients obtain home care services like housekeeping and laundry so they can live independently and safely at home.

"I love it when I can talk one on one with a person in the office and help them to see that they're OK and that they can take care of themselves," says Sister Anne. "I like helping them feel empowered to take care of themselves. It's always nice when you can make someone feel better."

Maintaining contact with clients is an important part of Sister Anne's ministry. "Most of our clients have family members who are in regular contact with them," she says. "Some of them don't have families and then we become their family."

Sister Anne enjoys the opportunities to interact with clients and put them at ease. "It's very rewarding to bring a little bit of calm and peace to them when they feel stressed out," she says. "It's just wonderful to become a little part of their lives, to share their stories and affirm them for what they're able to do."

Another important aspect of Sister Anne's ministry is the connection with Catherine McAuley's service to the poor and sick. "We serve the sick and the poor every day," says Sister Anne, who keeps a picture of Catherine McAuley in her office as a reminder to be a merciful presence to her clients. "I always try to approach them with the sense of bringing God's mercy to them."

While Sister Anne's clients may experience medical challenges, she says it is a blessing for her to help people "manage their lives and their health care problems and help them to be agents for themselves and their own health care."

Another blessing is sharing a laugh with her patients. "Sometimes they have a lot of problems in their lives and can feel overwhelmed and helpless," Sister Anne says. "For them to have some lighthearted moments is a wonderful blessing.

"This program and what we're able to do for people is just wonderful," she adds. "It's great to be a part of a team that works so well together to provide these services. It's very rewarding, and it gives me a sense that we're all in this together."