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Imagine: Elder Care

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Talk with parents, review options before crisis arises

TAMERA NIELSON • FOR LANSING STATE JOURNAL • DECEMBER 17, 2009

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An often sad and overwhelming issue facing the Sandwich Generation is the possibility of placing their [parents](#) in an assisted living facility.



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Marion Owen, executive director of the Tri-County Office on Aging, and other experts can make the issue appear far less ominous. Owen offers [insight](#), creative alternative, practical solutions and most importantly, hope.

"The trend now is toward getting proper care in the home rather than in an institutional setting," Owen says. "Nursing homes' primary emphasis is also on rehabilitation and getting the patients back home."

Her practical advice on how to approach caring for aging parents starts with a sobering statement: "Kids want their parents to be [safe](#), but living in a nursing home does not mean they're safe."

According to Owen, [Michigan](#) does not have a legal definition for "assisted living," meaning some of these facilities are licensed, some are not.

She says there are plenty of suitable, cost-effective alternatives for your aging parents.

The Office on Aging guides people through this difficult stage by focusing on creating a better quality of life for their parents. One alternative is moving older adults into a senior apartment community.

The Tri-County Office on Aging has agreements with 25 in-home care agencies. Each must meet certain criteria, including a comprehensive checklist (found on their Web site) and being licensed and bonded.

To satisfy the [safety](#) factor,' Owen recommends considering a Lifeline, which older adults can wear around their necks. Coupling this with as-needed in-home care for issues - such as bathing, cleaning, and laundry - can keep a person happier in her own home.

Also, the community offers a host of social activities to [engage](#) seniors, which aid in their long-term well-being and happiness.



Port Huron Times-Herald file photo (Helping hand: Visiting nurse Becky Cokonougher (l))



Strike? Terry Brackenbury, 81, watches his digital bowling ball on the up swing of high shot during a game of Wii bowling at Sanctuary at Marydale. Brackenbury won the tournament. (Port Huron Times-Herald file photo)

86%
of caregivers provide care for a relative

36%
of caregivers provide care for a parent

66%
of caregivers with an alternate full-time job have gone in late, left early or taken time off during the day to deal with caregiving issues

20%
of caregivers took a leave of absence from their job to provide care.