When sixty-seven-year-old Tawney Wray slipped on the ice and needed shoulder surgery two years ago, the active power-walker didn’t know how to cope with being incapacitated. She went from being completely self-sufficient to being unable to lift or carry anything. Luckily, two different professionals in her life referred her to Springwell. Soon Tawney was enrolled in the Massachusetts Home Care Program and receiving weekly home-making, food preparation, and laundry assistance, all coordinated with the help of a Springwell care advisor.

**Home Care: A Solution that Works**

For more than 37 years, Springwell care advisors have been helping seniors manage services that help keep them independent through the Massachusetts Home Care Program. This program is funded by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, and provides for twenty-two different kinds of in-home services. Three different tiers of the program support low-income seniors who need anything from basic and temporary services, to long-term, comprehensive supports. It also provides help for caregivers who need respite services.

Although Tawney expected to need the Home Care Program only briefly, a second fall led to more surgery, another year of receiving services, and a new care advisor, Sasha Csatari, who joined Springwell in 2014 (pictured, right, with Tawney). Throughout her experience, Tawney has been impressed with the support she’s gotten from Springwell. “I love my care advisors! When Sasha came along, within ten minutes, I was assured by what a nice and competent young lady she is. She is so conscientious. I tell her all the time to just relax!”

“I won’t forget Springwell. Without it, my quality of life these past two years would not have been good. And now I know where to turn when I need more help in the future.”

Tawney is hoping to transition out of the Home Care Program and get back to her active, self-sufficient life once she heals from her next surgery this spring. “I will get back to my power-walking,” she says, “but I won’t forget Springwell. Without it, my quality of life these past two years would not have been good. And now I know where to turn when I need more help in the future.”
Profiles in Care: The Mental Health Wellness Program

Katherine, a seventy-seven-year-old widow, suffered from depression and anxiety. Each day, while her son was at work, she made phone calls to multiple state and local agencies with a variety of requests. Rarely did she need anything specific from them, she simply wanted the comfort of talking with someone. Concerned about Katherine’s well-being, one of the agencies called Springwell seeking help for her.

A Springwell care advisor reached out to both Katherine and her son. Although Katherine was too anxious to meet personally with a care advisor, her son was very concerned because Katherine was struggling with basic tasks, such as bathing herself. The care advisor determined that Katherine was eligible for government-subsidized services, including a personal care worker who would help her bathe; however, several attempts to meet with Katherine were unsuccessful.

Springwell's care advisors are experts at planning and managing the in-home services that can help seniors maintain their independence, but sometimes an individual's behavioral health issues make it difficult to assess and co-ordinate these services. It is often very difficult for a typical care advisor, who manages a caseload of up to 95 seniors, to spend the time necessary to establish a trusting relationship.

“People with mental and behavioral health issues are often misunderstood and underserved.”

Fortunately, five years ago, with the support of a private foundation (see accompanying Profile article), Springwell established a Mental Health Wellness Program that made it possible for specially trained Mental Health Wellness (MHW) care advisors to work with a caseload of only 30 seniors.

Molly Benisch, one of Springwell's MHW care advisors, reached out to Katherine. Molly worked with Katherine for several months, eventually visiting her at home and developing a positive, trusting relationship with her. Finally, Katherine felt comfortable accepting help. In addition to receiving in-home personal-care services, Katherine began attending an adult day-care center. Spending time with other people while her son is at work has reduced her anxiety and eliminated her need to make unnecessary phone calls.

People with mental and behavioral health issues are often misunderstood and underserved. Sometimes they simply need a little extra time and attention to uncover the key that makes service possible.
Springwell Launches New Website

After months of planning and preparation, Springwell launched a completely redesigned website so that people at all technical-comfort levels can easily navigate the site to find services and resources for seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers. The website allows visitors to quickly find the answers they need as well as information about Springwell’s career, volunteer, and donor opportunities.

“Springwell always strives to meet the needs of our community,” said Chief Executive Officer Ruth Beckerman-Rodau, “and increasingly people of all ages expect to have their questions about services, programs, and resources answered online. We are delighted that the interactive features of this website will help us get information into the hands of the people who need it.”

As part of the redesign project, more than 25 members of the Springwell community – from seniors enrolled in our Home-Care Program to participants in our Dining Sites and Personal-Care-Attendant Program – generously donated their time and likenesses to help us capture the breadth and depth of our community. Throughout the site, professional portraits, like those shown throughout this newsletter, pair staff with program participants; we hope you can see the warm and caring relationships between them.

Please visit our new website at www.springwell.com and let us know feedback can be sent to Beth Schultz, Director of Development, at bschultz@springwell.com.

DID YOU KNOW?

Q: What kind of services can Springwell coordinate?
   - Adult Day Care
   - Chore Services
   - Grocery Shopping
   - Habilitation Therapy
   - Home Health Services
   - Homemaking
   - Laundry
   - Personal Care
   - Respite Care
   - Transportation

A: All of the above. Let us help you put together the most appropriate package for you or your loved one.
For years, Springwell’s staff grappled with the growing problem of how to best serve individuals with significant behavioral issues who were enrolled in the Massachusetts Home Care Program. These seniors often refused the support they most needed, sometimes requiring three, four, or five visits before they were even ready for a home-delivered-meal driver to knock on their door. Those who did accept services were frequently unable to maintain a relationship with their in-home worker. Care advisors in this program typically have a caseload of 85 to 95 individuals and visit them a minimum of twice a year. The program simply did not allow for the intensive time necessary to provide care to individuals whose behavioral-health issues made establishing a trusting relationship difficult.

Fortunately, Springwell had a friend: a friend who listened to the challenges these seniors and Springwell were facing, engaged in discussions of possible solutions, and made a significant donation to help respond. With the generous support of the Leaves of Grass Fund, Springwell’s Mental Health Wellness Program (MWH) was launched.

The Leaves of Grass Fund made it possible for Springwell to hire a full-time care advisor with a dramatically reduced caseload. This allows the time to engage and build trust with these most vulnerable seniors. The Mental Health Wellness care advisor is also able to closely monitor relationships with personal-care workers and troubleshoot potential problems. In MHW’s first year, more than 90% of the seniors in the program maintained at least one in-home service they were not receiving before enrolling in the program.

When the Executive Office of Elder Affairs began to consider how to better meet the needs of seniors with significant behavioral-health problems, it looked to Springwell’s Mental Health Wellness Program as a successful service-delivery model. Home Care Programs across the state are now able to assign vulnerable seniors to a case manager with a reduced caseload who has the valuable asset of time. Springwell is proud of the part our innovative Mental Health Wellness Program played in this improvement and grateful to the trustees of the Leaves of Grass Fund for investing in our response to this difficult problem.

Solutions for Seniors, Individuals With Disabilities & Those Who Provide Care

Springwell is the federally designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and the state-designated Aging Services Access Point (ASAP) for the communities of Belmont, Brookline, Needham, Newton, Waltham, Watertown, Wellesley and Weston. Services are made possible in part by contracts with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and MassHealth. Additional services are made possible through contracts with insurance and health care providers as well as through the generosity of individuals, corporations, foundations and communities of faith that provide critical support.

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