



The LEADERSHIP LOG

More than 40 years of informed opinion about issues facing elders today.

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From the Desk of James F. Seagle, Jr. President, Rogerson Communities



At the turn of the century, the nineteenth to the twentieth, Rogerson Communities was a single home called The Home for Aged Men. Fifty elder men were housed in a former civil war infirmary on West Springfield Street in the South End. Demand was high and the home had an extensive waiting list. To help the men on that list, Trustees of the home established a program called Outside Aide; a vestige of it persists today. At a weekly meeting of a Trustee Committee, small stipends were granted to support men awaiting admission. The program grew to over 100 men regularly supported. When the Trustees became concerned about the proper expenditure of these funds by the old guys, they did something quite extraordinary. They established the very first social service office, community based, serving elders. The social worker was charged with assuring that stipends were used for food and lodging and not for drink. This was the first of many innovations to come.

Now we have one of our most important innovations in jeopardy, our Adult Day Health Program. Our first ADHP was opened in 1978 in the ground floor of Rogerson House on The Jamaica Way. At the time, the only program like it in the state was in Amherst. To accommodate the program we put a ramp at the main entrance and converted an unused woodworking shop into accessible bathrooms. Over the years we refined the model, adding rehabilitative and social services to the medical model. During the nineties we were selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to help with the development of dementia day treatment.

All of our ADH programs provide a nearly complete range of medical, nursing, social service and assistance with activities of daily living. They maintain individuals, who would qualify for institutional care, in their homes and relieve families of the stress of constant care giving. Policymakers should note that ADH is provided at a fraction of the cost of other modalities of care but, unfortunately, is not mandated under Medicaid. So, in light of the current budget crisis, the State is threatening to seriously underfund Adult Day Services. Eleven of our sister programs closed last year and many others are teetering on the brink.

In testimony at the recent rate hearing held by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, State Senator Barbara L'Italien, whose mother became a participant in adult day services toward the end of her life, was eloquent and quite up-to-date on the facts. She spoke to the value of the program to the individual but also how quintessentially important it is for working families. She finally stated that forty of her fellow Senators will sign on to her recommendation that rates be raised to equal costs. Emily Shea, Commissioner on Affairs of the Elderly, brought words from Mayor Marty Walsh. She had served on the State's Adult Day Health Working Group which studied ADH in 2011-2012 and testified that the current rate structure will fall short of that group's recommendation. These two speakers and what they had to say suggest a strong political base for moving current Administration thinking. In the months to come, Rogerson through the state association, MADSA, will be continuing to advocate. There will be a PR push through the media and a "ground game" as families, staff and friends make contact with legislators.

Adult Day Health Services provide more healthcare and health promotion than any other setting for each dollar expended. These programs relieve poor working families of the unsustainable care-giving burden presented by elders with complex co-morbidities and/or advanced dementia. They save the state real money, preventing emergency room and hospital utilization and premature nursing home placement. Most importantly, they provide high quality health and rehabilitation care in a social setting. Every day, participants go out into the sunshine on the way to spending a day with friends engaged in healthy living. Everyone should support this innovation. ■

James