

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for allowing me to speak before you today. My name is Josie Johnson, I have worked as a health care professional for over 30 years. Presently I am employed with the WVHCS'S VNA Dept in Wilkes-Barre. When I took my first hospice case with the VNA I had thought I seen everything, but it was merely the tip of the iceberg. Going into homes to assist our elderly with everyday living and personnel care was in the beginning very overwhelming to me. I've been asked to count briefs, and place a pad inside them in hopes to get another shift out of them, and to possible get them through until the next check day. I've been asked to turn the thermostat down for the night, to try and save on the heat bill because she couldn't afford to go over the reimbursement she was provided. When in reality you know in your mind she was lying there counting the hours until your return. Only to return in the morning to raise the thermostat provide her with a warm towel and wait until she was warm enough to give her a bath. Food Shopping this really hit me when I had been given a list of on sale frozen dinners, a box of mother's oats and a carton of milk. In hopes that would get them until the next check. Because the cost of her medication exceeded her budget for the month, but yet still left with enough pride to try and give a dollar to the delivery man at the door. Do you know what it is like to make 1 cup of mother's oats knowing your client is going to divide it in 3 and try to get 3 breakfasts out of it ? I find myself giving "more" than all of me in hopes to be able to go home and say yes, another job well done. Sometimes I can't and I just go home and tell myself you did everything you could for them. They are in a position where they will not ask nor will they tell because of their fear of long care facilities. If they fall you can bet it will take everything you have and then some to get them to the hospital to be checked. Why because in their mind that will be it ,you'll never let them come home. There is no experience more devastating then placing a 85 yr old in a room with someone that does not have all their faculties. It not familiar to them nor is it something they want to see. They want "PRIDE" they want "DIGNITY". Our elders have experienced war, flood, depression but nothing comes close to what they experience today. Our economy makes it harder and harder for our elders to get through each day. We forget one factor and that is we are where we are today because of their hard work, their ambition and their dedication in every project they achieved in their younger days. And a lot of those projects contributed to the ailments they struggle with today. Born and raised a Roman Catholic I have been taught never to question, but yet I still find myself asking why ? why must they live like this day after day. I ask of all you upon your departure today, put yourself in their shoes whether yourself or a loved one, and write a list of wants, needs, goals. Then sit down and really ask yourself can I fore fill this list to it's fullest each and everyday. Or will I have to scratch off the extras as they do everyday. As I leave you today my hopes, my wants, my goals, none of which are of great expense, are just to have your support in entirety to help our elders get through the day. Without struggle, without fear, without depriving themselves in anyway. Providing them with a sense of pride in just knowing they will not be forced to leave their home before their dying day. Thank you all for your time and concerns and may you all have a great day !