

EXAMINER

Nonprofit helps former volunteer with recovery



Esther Bonnet is able to live independently with the help of services provided by Family and Children Services of Maryland.
(Kristine Buls/Examiner)

Emily Campbell, The Examiner

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BALTIMORE - Esther Bonnet is not your typical 93-year-old.

On Wednesdays she volunteers in the library at the Barclay Elementary School. On Thursdays she plays the handbells during her church's services. On Fridays she goes for seated yoga class. And the list goes on.

"The rest of the time I am at home doing a variety of things," Bonnet said.

Bonnet lives independently in her two-story townhome in Baltimore city, dependent only on two canes due to severe arthritis in her legs.

But Bonnet does occasionally rely on the services of Family and Children Services of Central Maryland. In 2000, she was hospitalized for dehydration and again due to surgery for breast cancer. She used the agency's services for in-home care as well as housekeeping purposes.

"I have to have my bed changed and someone to clean the kitchen and bedroom," she said.

Family and Children Services of Central Maryland is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing services to families and individuals during all stages of life. Housekeeping and in-home care for elderly individuals is one of their specialties.

Originally from Philadelphia, Bonnet came to Baltimore in 1967 when her husband joined the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.

"When I moved to Baltimore, I needed a volunteer job," Bonnet said. She volunteered with Family and Children Services of Central Maryland before she required their services. "I worked with older people for 12 years."

Sallie Hedenstad, the director of elder services for the organization, said Bonnet is a role model.

"Esther really is amazing," she said. "Her mental capacity is amazing. She is always concerned about other people, she's out there helping others. She never feels sorry for herself. I just think it's wonderful."

When asked if she thought she would continue living independently, Bonnet answered "Yes, I will," without hesitation, then added that the help from Family and Children Services agency is near and dear to her heart.

"The agency holds the highest value for me, because I've watched them grow and develop, and I've been involved with their services."

Family and Children's Services of Central Maryland is a private, nonprofit, nonsectarian agency. We support individuals and families throughout their lifespan through programs that address issues including family violence, sexual abuse, parent/child issues, teen pregnancy prevention, single or teen parenthood and elder care.

In-Home Aid and Caregiving is one of six programs offered by FCS for senior citizens and the adult disabled. Each is designed to encourage independence, enhance quality of life and strengthen community ties.

For more information about FCS programs, please visit www.fcsm.org.



Administrative Offices

4623 Falls Road / Baltimore, MD 21209
410-366-1980

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