

OPTIONS Provides Alternative Answer For Seniors

■ **Caroline Henzé-Gongola**, *Contributing Writer*

LEESBURG — Baby boomers continue to grey, and the responsibility of caring for elderly or ill relatives is fast becoming a reality for families of all financial backgrounds. Better alternatives are often being sought to avoid placing a loved-one

in a nursing facility. A local company dedicated to in-home care says it has the best answer to this quandary.

OPTIONS for Senior America Corporation provides live-in and live-out programs for families in Loudoun and surrounding areas. Leesburg branch manager Kris Rushing says the company's programs

assist the senior population to "age in place."

The business stemmed from the company's chief executive's own experience with caring for his parents. Rushing came to understand the rigors of providing such care in the time before her husband passed away from cancer. "I saw how important it was to care for people at home," she said.

Especially in a fast-paced area like Loudoun County, it is sometimes difficult for families to care for aging relatives themselves. OPTIONS has many programs ranging from a live-in certified nurse assistant to 12-hour assistance.

Rushing said that money is not the first issue people worry about when it comes to care. "It's knowing where to look [for help]. They don't have enough information," she said. Alternatives available to families sometimes require life-altering decisions to be made in a very short time frame, she added.

Although medical establishments often recommend OPTIONS, the company does not accept Medicare. Some long-term care insurance providers do offer policies that will cover the company's services.

OPTIONS carefully screens its employees, and each candidate must pass competency tests and a rigorous interview. The result is a roster of 150 care providers who can be mobilized on short notice. The firm is licensed by the Commonwealth of Virginia, bonded and insured, and carry workman's compensation coverage, said Rushing.

When a family requests care-giving service, the patient might resist outside help. To help alleviate the situation, Rushing said she tries to find someone

with similar needs and interests of the patient—from personal care to reading—to ensure compatibility. Sometimes the challenge involves finding care providers who speak the client's language. The key is that there is not a single method to care for seniors, she added, citing that many of those served by OPTIONS have problems that may make them perceived as "being difficult" at times.

While the business of care providing has its struggles, Rushing said it is rewarding to help others. "It's never just a job," she said. For her, caring about the well being of each client makes the position an

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Options For Senior America's sign signals a friendly place to receive help for many families.

emotional one.

OPTIONS began 16 years ago and has several offices located on the east coast, including its corporate headquarters in Silver Springs, MD. The Loudoun office is adjacent to Dodona Manor and opened two years ago.

More information on OPTIONS can be found on the company Web site at: www.optionscorp.com.