

Granny NANNIES Takes Florida By Storm

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For years, parents and grandparents lovingly sacrifice blood, sweat and tears to care for their loved ones. Yet, as life comes full circle, they later find themselves the ones in need of care. It's often a double bind, no-win situation. Families want the best care for their elderly loved ones, but to do so may mean sacrificing time away from their immediate families to do it themselves. Or, they put them in a nursing home and then spend their time worrying about how they're being treated—still robbing their time and peace of mind.



According to a USA Today/ABC News/Gallup Poll of baby boomers published in June, 41 percent have a living parent and are providing either financial or personal care or both. Of those, 8 percent say their parents have moved in with them and another 37 percent say they expect them to do so in the future.

Enter Granny NANNIES. You've most likely heard the name. They now have 16 places around Florida and have branched into five other states. But, what you may not know is that it isn't just for grannies or senior care. It's for anyone who needs assistance or is suffering from any disability or dementia as well. They'll even do "well care" for people just needing help through the week or help new mothers as they get adjusted to juggling house and baby.

Granny NANNIES founder Rob Hodgson said the company grew out of a personal need while in search of the "right kind of care" for his 87-year old grandmother, Esther Dowding. After a pointless search, he moved his family from New Hampshire to Florida and did the only thing he knew to do—started his own company providing the kind of care for others they too were needing.

"It's a cute name and that's pretty much where it ends," Hodgson said. "The majority is women because they typically live longer, but we help anybody in need. But our main focus is for those who are no longer able to care for themselves and have family members in distant states. We'll do everything from light housekeeping, to meal preparation, bathing, doctors' appointments, errands and shopping. It's the best scenario for families for who nursing homes aren't an option and who want extra special personal care for their loved ones."

Granny NANNIES hires certified nursing aids and home health aides. Applicants go through highly scrutinized education verification, physical, background and criminal searches.

"We're not just a companion sitter. We are regulated by The Agency for Health Care Administration. We had to meet their strict state guidelines and we exceed those--just like hospitals and nursing facilities, we're audited on an annual or biannual basis by the state. We are HIPAA compliant and all Granny NANNIES personnel are bonded and insured, and regularly participate in in-service training to keep their skills current," Hodgson said.

Agencies like Granny NANNIES can be a godsend to working families and are shown to not only improve the quality of life of the elderly and special needs patients, but also may extend their years because of the assistance they receive.

Studies also show that people who need care, but don't have help with daily personal tasks such as bathing, are more likely to be hospitalized for acute illness. Dowding passed away in December at the age of 104--almost 20 years after Granny NANNIES began. Hodgson attributes her longevity to the type of care they provided her and all other clients.

“She’s the reason we started it all!” Hodgson said. “Nobody wants to go to a nursing home. They do everything in their power to remain at home and that’s where we come in. No matter high-tech medicine gets, someone is always needed at a person’s bedside to give that personal care. You may get Medicare home care when discharged and maybe they come once or twice a week for a while. But, just because you get a visit from an RN doesn’t mean you’ll be OK the rest of the day. Most of the time when Medicare is out there, we’re out there. But, when Medicare stops, we stay out there. We work in conjunction with Medicare; we’re not in competition with them or Hospice.”

Caring for the elderly is not only costly financially, physically and emotionally, but it also takes a bite out of the economy.

A study released by the AARP estimates that 34 million Americans served as unpaid caregivers for other adults in 2006, creating a \$350 billion economical impact. In addition, the National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) estimates that \$659,000 per person is lost in pensions, Social Security benefits and wages as people take off time to care for their parents. Caregivers also take twice as much time off for being sick, as do other workers.

Agencies such as Granny NANNIES serve as a familial and economical life raft.

Marian Berke, account manager with Total Medical Solutions, uses Granny NANNIES frequently for workers’ compensation claims.

“They have given us very good service,” Berke said. “We do grade the agencies based on response time to our requests and also their staff availability and accountability--being there when they say they’ll be there. And they’ve come through on those. They do the same thing as other home health agencies, but all agencies are not all created equal. They’re not all user-friendly like Granny NANNIES. With home care agencies, the training of their staff is vital. Based on the home health aides we’ve used, we get very few complaints from them.”

“Florida sets the curve for the rest of the country,” Hodgson said. “It’s one of the most regulated states in the country and there is more competition in Florida so that speaks volumes about us that we’ve had zero deficiencies. We’re aggressively growing now and I expect us to triple in the next three to five years. We know what we’re doing.”

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