

Butler Eagle
FOCUS

Service fulfills lifelong dream

Company offers care to seniors

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SARVER — Although Brenda Metal's job put enough money in her pocket, she felt she wasn't making much of a difference.

In order to correct the imbalance in her life, Metal quit her day job as a "headhunter" and founded a company she named Caring Companions, with herself as its only employee.

Caring Companions, now grown to a dozen or more women, offers non-medical services to the elderly and those who care for them, Metal said.

Non-medical services mean a lot of different things to a lot of different clients. It can be as simple as visiting with a senior citizen while family members are away, to meal preparation, to transport to appointments, to bed and bath transfers.

For Metal and her clients, the key to the service is consistency. It's going to be the same caregiver that comes to the house every time.

"If it's different people every time, there's no bonding. Besides, who likes change?" Metal said. "We laugh with them. We cry. We end up being part of the family."

She and her "girls" care for the elderly in their homes all over the area.

"My mom is leery of strangers and she can't be left alone," said Terri Kelly of Sarver, whose mother, Theresa Thomm is a client of Caring Companions.

"She says 'Your friend came over to sit with me today,' because she thinks that's who her Caring Companion is," Kelly said.

Thomm loved to cook, "so there's a lot of cooking when her companion comes. They play cards. She loves to do that," said Kelly.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Brenda Metal visits an 81-year-old client in his home. She cooks for him throughout the week. She bathes him, takes him out, performs in-home tasks and grocery shops for

him. Metal used to be the only employee of Caring Companions and still visits with clients on a regular basis.

"It's always been my dream to do this. It's not easy, but I've never regretted it. It's made me a better person."

BRENDA METAL,
Caring Companions founder

The most important thing for Kelly is that her mom is "less stressed and not afraid."

The client seniors the Caring Companions serve are all "functional" said Metal.

She stressed her service is not medical in nature. They're not physical or occupational therapists. They're not

nurses.

They are, however, often the difference between an elderly person staying at home and being placed in a long-term health care facility before physical health warrants it.

From first-hand experience — grandma lived with the family when Metal was a teenager — Metal knows

what it's like to be the at-home provider of all the details and efforts for someone frail.

While she was in college, Metal put her elder care experience to work to make the rent. Later in life, she noticed the more money she made on her regular job, the more superficial it seemed.

"I've got money in the bank, but what am I doing?" she asked herself. "It wasn't fulfilling, so I quit."

"It's always been my dream to do this. It's not easy, but I've never regretted it," Metal said. "It's made me a better person."