



Ethyl Barnes demonstrates hair care on Melanie McBryde as other VIP participants look on.

Helping Others Grow Old Gracefully

BY BONNIE BRECHBILL
Franklin Co. Correspondent
CHAMBERSBURG — Fourteen adults sit in a room trying to sew buttons onto pieces of clothing while wearing rubber gloves. Next, they try to do crossword puzzles while wearing glasses that have one lens smeared with Vaseline.

While these activities may appear humorous to a casual onlooker, they have a very serious purpose. The people with the rubber gloves and smudged glasses are learning about the problems an elderly person with failing eyesight and arthritis must face. The obstructed lens of the glasses simulates a cataract; the rubber gloves make the hands clumsy, as they are in persons with arthritis.

The participants in this exercise are training to be VIPs — Volunteer Information Providers.

The Volunteer Information Provider Program (VIP) is an educational program utilizing the Extension network. It was originated by Burton Halpert, Ph.D., at the University of Missouri in 1985 and was used in rural Missouri counties for one year.

Training teams from ten states, including Pennsylvania, went to Kansas City, Missouri in January 1987 for three days of training. In April 1987, the program began as a pilot project in Union, Snyder, Montour and Northumberland Counties. The state training team instructed the county teams, who would eventually train the volunteers. In November 1987 teams from Cumberland, Adams and Franklin Counties were trained. Franklin County's team consisted of a nurse, a retired school administrator, the family living program aide and six staff members from the Area Agency on Aging. They began training local volunteers in April.

The program's training manual defines a Volunteer Information Provider as someone who wants to share helpful information with a family member, friend, neighbor, or any other person who is providing care to an elderly family member. The caregiver may be assisting someone in the home on a daily basis or helping with such responsibilities as shopping, meals, transportation, or locating necessary services when needed.

The objectives of the program are to help families, friends and neighbors:

1. Deal with the stress of caregiving.
2. Reduce the communication problems between caregivers and elderly persons.
3. Learn techniques for providing personal care, such as lifting and transferring an older person, giving a bath or shower, self-dressing skills, etc.
4. Learn how to use medicines wisely and deal more effectively with health care resources to aid elderly persons for whom they are providing care.
5. Be able to identify and access community resources that can help elderly persons for whom they are providing care.

An important point is that the VIP provides information only — he or she does not take on caregiving tasks.

Sometimes, however, VIPs are called upon to demonstrate caregiving skills.

Tawnya McNeill, a registered nurse from Mercersburg, was asked by her minister to attend the two and a half day VIP training.

Shortly afterwards, she was able to share information with a neighbor whose husband had recently had open heart surgery. McNeill demonstrated to the neighbor the proper technique for getting the man safely out of bed.

McNeill is active in social ministry in her church. She gave a talk to the church's senior citizens on how to give a bed bath, why a bed-ridden person must be turned often, and on the aging process in general.

A half day of the course was spent on such aspects of the aging process as Sensory Deprivation, Physical Changes, Mental Changes, Emotional Aspects, and Environmental Adaptions.

Blue Ridge Summit resident Melanie McBryde, another VIP, shares information when she visits the elderly of her church. She has also arranged for a nurse to speak to the Prime Timers (over 55) of the church on the aging process.

McBryde often stays with elderly persons so that the caregiver can go out for little while. The course helped make her aware of the stresses involved in caring for the elderly.

"Caregivers must realize that

they're not superman," McBryde said. "They need to let others help."

While stress may arise from the day to day care of an elderly person, other areas may also induce stress. According to VIP McNeill, the course helped participants to understand the guilt many people feel about placing their parents in a nursing home. They may therefore decide to take their parents into their own home and care for them, "but then they have less time for their own family," which is also guilt-producing, McNeill said.

Stress reduction techniques taught in the program include deep breathing, progressive relaxation of the muscles, and visualization. Physical symptoms of stress include dry mouth, pounding heart, change in appetite, frequent urination, and the urge to scream, cry or run.

Another helpful aspect of the program was the emphasis on referral services. Because McBryde is not native to the area, she did not know what services are available locally to the elderly. "The local government and the civic clubs all have certain services that they provide such as legal aid or transportation," McBryde said.

Although McNeill is a nurse, the information on referral services was new to her. "I work in critical care," she explained. "I never had to make referrals for at-home care — the social services department takes care of that."

While referral information is relatively easy and straightforward for a volunteer to share with a caregiver, some of the information VIPs are expected to get across is a bit more touchy. They are well instructed in ways to teach information tactfully.

In the introduction to their Resource Manual, volunteers are told:

"Having information to share is not unlike being a salesperson. First thing you have to do is to discover what the person is like. Some people are very private and hesitate to let others know their needs. Others don't want to admit they need help. In approaching this type of person, it is important to be indirect. For example:

(Turn to Page B20)

See your nearest
NEW HOLLAND

**Dealer for Dependable
Equipment and Dependable
Service:**

PENNSYLVANIA

Beavertown, PA

B&R Farm
Equipment, Inc
RD 1, Box 217A
717-658-7024

Belleville, PA

Ivan J Zook
Farm Equipment
Belleville, Pa
717-935-2948

Canton, PA

Hess Farm Equipment
717-673-5143

Carlisle, PA

Paul Shovers, Inc.
35 East Willow Street
717-243-2686

Chambersburg, PA

Clugston
Implement, Inc.
R.D. 1
717-263-4103

Davidsburg, PA

George N. Gross, Inc.
R.D. 2, Dover, PA
717-292-1673

Elizabethtown, PA

Messick Farm
Equipment, Inc.
Rt. 283 - Rheem's Exit
717-367-1319

Gettysburg, PA

Yingling Implements,
Inc.
3291 Taneytown Rd.
717-359-4848

Greencastle, PA

Meyers
Implement's Inc.
400 N. Antrim Way
P.O. Box 97
717-597-2176

Halifax, PA

Sweigard-Bros.
R.D. 3, Box 13
717-896-3414

Hamburg, PA

Shartesville
Farm Service
R.D. 1, Box 1392
215-488-1025

Honey Brook, PA

Dependable Motor Co
East Main Street
215-273-3131
215-273-3737

Honey Grove, PA

Norman D. Clark
& Son, Inc.
Honey Grove, PA
717-734-3682

Hughesville, PA

Farnsworth Farm
Supplies, Inc
103 Cemetery Street
717-584-2106

Lancaster, PA

Lancaster Ford
Tractor, Inc.
1655 Rohrerstown Rd.
717-569-7063

Loysville, PA

Paul Shovers, Inc
Loysville, PA
717-789-3117

New Holland, PA

A B C Groff, Inc
110 South Railroad
717-354-4191

Oley, PA

C.J. Wonsidler Bros.
R.D. 2
215-987-6257

Pitman, PA

Schreffler Equipment
Randy L. Schreffler
Pitman, PA
717-648-1120

Quakertown, PA

C.J. Wonsidler Bros
R.D. 1
215-536-1935

Quarryville, PA

C.E. Wiley & Son, Inc
101 South Lime Street
717-786-2895

Ringtown, PA

Ringtown Farm
Equipment
Ringtown, PA
717-889-3184

Tamaqua, PA

Charles S. Snyder, Inc
R.D. 3
717-386-5945

West Grove, PA

S.G. Lewis & Son, Inc
R.D. 2, Box 66
215-869-2214

MARYLAND

Churchville, MD

Walter G. Coale, Inc
2849-53
Churchville Rd
301-734-7722

Frederick, MD

Ceresville
Ford New Holland, Inc
Rt 26 East
301-662-4197
Outside MD,
800-331-9122

Hagerstown, MD

Antietam Ford Tractor
301-791-1200

NEW JERSEY

Bridgeton, N.J.

Leslie G. Fogg, Inc.
Canton & Stow Creek
Landing Rd.
609-451-2727
609-935-5145

Washington, NJ

Frank Rymon & Sons
201-689-1464

Woodstown, NJ

Owen Supply Co
Broad Street &
East Avenue
609-769-0308