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Patients and Caregivers Benefit from Physician House Calls

Going to the doctor's office can be an exhausting, logistically complex ordeal for older patients and their caregivers. Many people with multiple medical conditions, or are homebound, put off going to the doctor because "it's just too hard." By waiting, they end up in the Emergency Room or are hospitalized, both of which might have been avoided. Do any physicians still make house calls? Yes. Physician House Calls, a program of Jewish Senior *Life*[™], (JSL) has received a three-year grant of \$552,306 from Greater Rochester Health Foundation (GRHF) to expand its home visitation program.

"Family members aren't always sure how to provide care and seek direction and moral support. Through Physician House Calls, we can provide comprehensive and timely care," says Dan Katz, president and CEO of JSL. "The House Calls' medical team is able to get a better picture of how patients function at home and identify issues that might not be seen in the physician's office."

Dr. Karyn Leible, senior vice president of medical services at JSL says, "Regionally, we saw that people 65+ accounted for 10,000+ preventable hospital admissions and 14,000 potentially avoidable emergency room admissions over eight years. Clearly, there was an opportunity to improve patient care and provide much-needed support to families. Through this grant from GRHF, we will be able to care for more people of all faiths in the city and SE Monroe County." "In reviewing the grant application from JSL, the GRHF board's program committee was struck by the potential to improve patient care and decrease the hospitalization rate from 40/100 to 25/100 patients per year," says Louis Papa, MD, chair of the program committee.

Ellsworth Downs, a Physician House Call patient, cannot drive and lives with his daughter and son-in-law. "Not only is it difficult for me to get to a doctor's office, but at age 90, I am not eager to sit in the waiting room with a lot of sick people. When I need help, Dr. Vargish is there." Vonnie Askins, Downs' daughter, says, "It's great to know if you *don't* need to rush someone to the hospital but it's as important to understand when you *should* take a family member for care. When we are uncertain, Dr. Vargish and the House Calls team is only a phone call away."

John Urban, president and CEO of GRHF says, "Comprehensive home visits by a physician have been shown to reduce mortality and admissions to long term care facilities for frail or 'at risk' adults. The range of physical ailments limits many people's ability to leaves their homes and medical transportation is expensive. Many family caregivers can't take time away from work and with families living across the country, there is not always someone to accompany an older adult

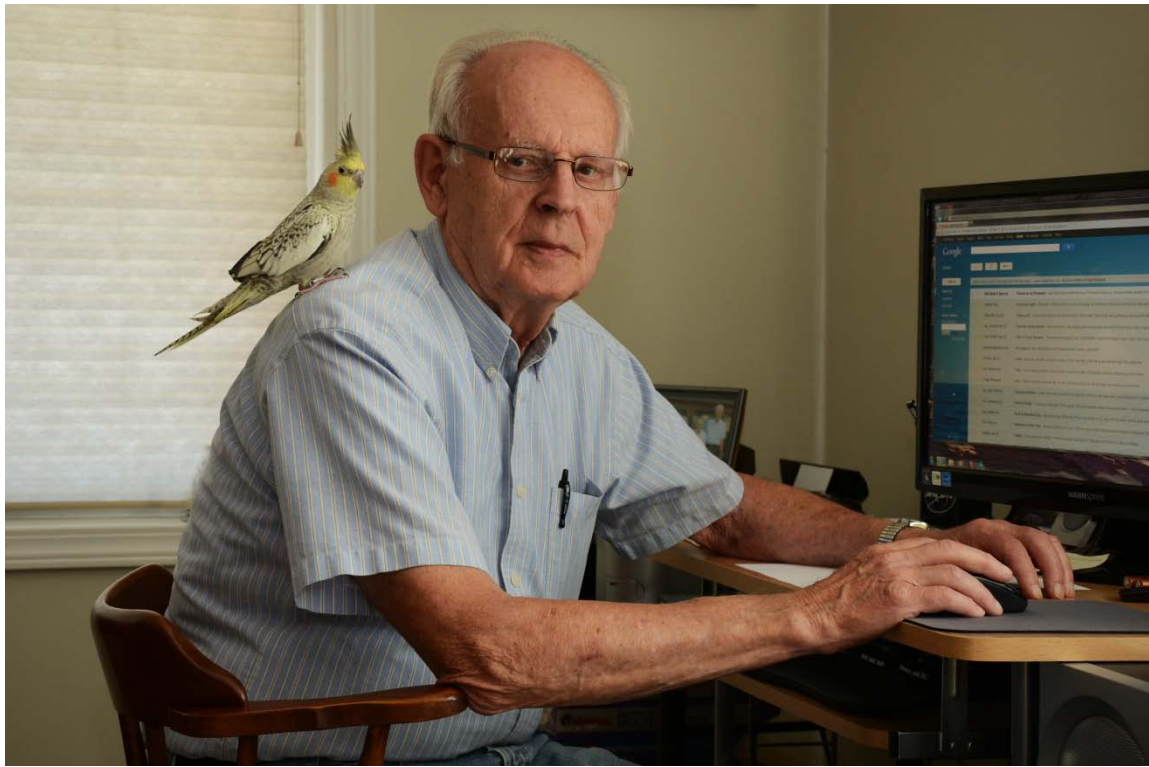
to the doctor's office. Jewish Senior *Life* initiated this program in 2008 and has an excellent track record of providing this service for homebound older adults. We are pleased to help them expand their services to more families.”

If you are an older adult or family caregiver who would like more information on Physician House Calls, call (585) 244-5993 or visit <http://www.jewishseniorlife.org>.

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Photo captions

Ellsworth Downs has been a Physician House Calls patient for three years and is known as the “gadget guy” for his use of his iPhone, iPod, Kindle e-reader and computers. “Goodie” keeps him company on a regular basis.



Dr. Lisa Vargish, a part of the Physician House Calls team of Jewish Senior *Life*TM, is considered a “member of the family” by the Downs/Askins family. Downs says, “She never rushes through the visit and I really know she is looking at me as a person not just as a heart patient.”

