

JEFFERSON CITY, MO

News Tribune

From Missouri's Capital City.

www.newstribune.com

Friday, October 20, 2006

Posted: Tuesday, Sep 26, 2006 - 06:29:02 pm CDT

Sonnenberg enjoys career as geriatric care manager

By Angie Hutschreider
angieh@newstribune.com

Jan Sonnenberg has spent more than 20 years helping older adults and continues to do so now as a geriatric care manager with Professional Family, LLC.

Sonnenberg received her degree in social work from Valpariso University, but found that helping older adults was her calling.

She began her career as the first administrator of Heisinger Lutheran Home and spent her time focusing on improving the lives and health care of those in her care.

Sonnenberg said she now helps families and individuals make decisions for older adults "ensuring they get the care they need." She usually finds herself working with clients who have no family locally or no family to help with the decisions.

"A family member typically does this, but I help out where family is unable," she said. "More often than not, I work for the family in helping their older family member with things they may not be able to."

She assists clients with insurance questions, explains and provides health care



Jan Sonnenberg, left, goes over paperwork with her mother, Mildred Kletke, as part of services offered in her role as owner of Professional Family, LLC., a geriatric care management company. (Julie Smith/News Tribune photo)

options, helps with financial planning and even takes clients to doctor appointments.

Sonnenberg ensures her clients are in a place where they can live comfortably and also that the client understands his or her health situation, which is why she takes such a hands-on approach.

"I go with them to appointments to make sure what they learn is integrated to their living situation," she said.

By not working with a certain provider, Sonnenberg feels she has more options to help her clients find what is right for them. "The advantage I have not working with specific provider is that I can help the client through all of the stages," she added.

Sonnenberg also can set up safety features at a client's home, such as Response Link, and is usually the life line contact for the client.

While her overarching services include all stages of the person's life and range of needs, Sonnenberg says each client is so different it is hard to describe all she does.

"I usually just do the leg work for them by making calls and doing research to get the answers they may not know how to get," she said. "I can simplify things for them and save them time and, perhaps, money.

"If I can learn something in 10 minutes that it may have taken them two weeks to learn on their own, it can help them make better choices for themselves."

In short, Sonnenberg ensures her clients are taken care of.

"As we get older, it gets harder for us in dealing with some medical, insurance and social situations and I help them with all of that," Sonnenberg said, noting she named her business Professional Family because it is important to her to provide her clients with the same services she does her own parents.

She enjoys her work in a field that is new to the area and enjoys helping families out during critical times.

She says her main goal is to ensure a client can be safe, happy and in control of his or her own life for as long as possible.

"I find it very enjoyable to help people lead the type of life they want to lead," Sonnenberg said. "I have always enjoyed working with older adults, probably because I enjoyed doing things with my grandparents and other older people."