



# OCCOA

## OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING



Submitted by  
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RESEARCH &  
VOLUNTEER  
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*We Help.  
We Care*

120 Grandview Blvd., Gaylord, Michigan 49735

### Let OCCOA be part of your "Network of Care"!

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- Agency Representatives
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- Complaint Resolution Procedure

#### Activities Calendar

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#### Senior Project FRESH

#### Special Events

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#### Technology & Aging ~ TAP

#### Volunteer Program

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JO WITH OCCOA SERVICE PROVIDER CHAR

"I used to be a secretary for Gaylord Community Schools. I was also the secretary for the president of Gaylord State Bank [now known as 5-3 Bank] for several years," she proudly shares.

Jo adds, "I have also done a lot of volunteering in the past. When my daughter was suffering with MS and in and out of the hospital, I became aware that many of the other patients had no family or friends to visit them. After my daughter passed away, for many years I visited patients in the hospital and the area nursing homes." She explains, "I wanted to 'give back' for the help and kindnesses our family received during that time." Jo notes that she was also a longtime volunteer for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). "I volunteered for the Gaylord State Police Post for eight years doing secretarial work," she recalls fondly. "I also volunteered for the Otsego County Commission on Aging's Reassurance Call program."

#### The Challenge . . .

Like so many other older adults in our rural Northern Michigan community, Jo's children are spread out all over the country. Her only-living daughter lives downstate in the Thumb. She has one son who lives in Illinois, one in Minnesota, and one in Oregon. The only one of her children who still lives in Gaylord is Jim.

Many older adults want to and are able to manage on their own, but when major changes occur, such as with the loss of a spouse or declining health, living independently can be greatly challenged or no longer an option. In this day and age, with so many adult children working fulltime jobs and/or living far from their aging parents, the challenge can become so great that many older adults have little choice but to move to a nursing home, foster care home, or assisted living facility.

#### Jo's Challenges Grow . . .

Jo shares, "Ever since my husband died, Jim has been wonderful! He has helped me take care of my home and kept everything running smoothly, in addition to working a fulltime job." Things became more of a challenge for mother and son, however, when Jo had to have back surgery and several hip surgeries. She recalls, "During this period, there were times when I would have a health emergency and Jim would have to leave work to take me to the hospital." She adds, "With all my health issues, I also had and continue to have lots of medical appointments. I gave up driving a couple years ago so I have not been able to drive to them, myself. With Jim still working, taking me, himself, is a challenge. I know some other younger people who still drive, but they are still working, too, so it's hard for them to get away. She jokes, "The rest of the people I know are all older and in as bad of shape as me!"

Due to her surgeries, an additional challenge that Jo has had to face is her loss of mobility. "After all those surgeries, I don't bend or move around so well," she laughs wryly. "I am often too weak to handle things by myself, like taking a shower and doing my household chores."

#### The OCCOA joins Jo's "Network of Care"!

Jo notes that after and between her various surgeries, it was obvious that her needs were greater than what her then-current network of care (Jim and a few good, close neighbors) could handle. It was then that she decided to contact the Otsego County Commission on Aging.

She shares, "With the additional help I received from the OCCOA, I was able to remain in my home after my surgeries." She recalls that she received prepared meals through the agency's Home-Delivered Meals program for a few months until she was able to prepare her own meals again. She notes, "I usually prefer my own cooking, but these meals were very helpful, and I was very thankful to have them."

The agency also arranged for Jo to receive personal care services and some homemaking assistance. For over the past two years, a few times a week, a couple of OCCOA service providers have helped her "get going" in the morning, including helping her with her showers and styling her hair. They have also helped her with her laundry and with making her bed. Jo shares, "Char and Marcy are a tremendous help to me and they are such lovely girls! If I'm feeling low, they perk me up!"

Jo notes that thanks to the OCCOA/RSVP Volunteer Medical Transportation Program, the challenge of getting frequent rides to medical appointments has been alleviated. She notes, "The girls in the OCCOA Customer Service Department have made finding rides to the doctor so much easier. They are always so obliging and make it so easy for me." She reflects, "Without the help I receive from the Commission on Aging, I don't know what I would do. They have been a Godsend for me!"

**IF YOU OR A LOVED ONE NEED TO EXPAND YOUR "NETWORK OF CARE," PLEASE CALL THE OTSEGO COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING AT (989) 732-1122 OR CONTACT US THROUGH OUR WEBSITE, WWW.OTSEGOCOUNTYCOA.ORG.**



OCCOA SERVICE PROVIDER CHAR STYLES JO'S HAIR AS PART OF HER CARE PLAN



JO RECEIVES HOMEMAKING ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE OCCOA

**989.732.1122 • www.OtsegoCountyCOA.org • Advocacy 989.732.9977**

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