



Living Well, a one stop shop for health

By **DIANE SMITH**

dsmith@thearknewspaper.com

One of the worst results of growing older is not being able to continue living in your own home. Most people would prefer to stay in a familiar house throughout their lives rather than go into a nursing home, but this doesn't always happen. Assisting elders to stay at home is the mission of the new Tiburon business, Living Well.

"We realize that seniors want to stay in their own homes but need a coordinated team to support them rather than just having a single homemaker worker," said Living Well co-founder Tessa ten Tusscher.

"Sometimes the problem is that the house is no longer senior friendly," said Lisa Grant, Director of Sales and Business Development. "We can help modify it to make the home safer and more comfortable, and we can install technology to monitor for health and safety and to communicate with the family, even if they're out-of-state."

Living Well's goal is to create a safe and nurturing environment, allowing for independence and dignity for seniors while offering peace of mind to the adult children and family members. Its mission is to "improve the quality of home-based support for elders, and it is committed to providing outstanding care and quality service."

It offers specialized care for those with chronic and debilitating conditions, such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and ALS, that compromise their ability to live in their homes – where they want to be.

Living Well tailors its services to each individual instead of going with a "one size fits all" as happens in large institutions. This is where Living Well can be invaluable.

Unlike assisted living or skilled nursing facilities, Living Well brings personalized, comprehensive services to a client in his/her own home using a team of experts in their fields. It has doctors and dentists who make house calls, geriatric nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, cooks, bookkeepers, handymen, professionals who can make home safety evaluations and inspections – and then can remedy the situation – reliable housekeepers, transportation and personal care providers.

By using the latest and most advanced tools available for remote medication management, care providers can monitor a client's medications, taking away the confusion that arises when there are numerous bottles and pills along with poor eyesight or memory.

Another new innovation is a GPS system that can be installed in a client's shoes, so if that person has a tendency to wander and get lost, he can be tracked. "Wanderers may leave the house without a purse or a jacket," said Grant, "but they rarely leave without shoes."

Other Living Well partners are the Bay Club where clients can work out, join a yoga, tai chi or aqua aerobics class; another partner is a concierge service that furnishes an as-needed personal assistant to do myriad services such as errand running, grocery shopping, appointment making or remind you of important dates.

Golden Gate Pharmacy provides individualized programs using a safe dispensing medication system on every level, including a very complicated mix of prescription drugs with over-the-counter medications.

Living Well has joined with Jessie et Laurent who have a very good reputation for producing delicious, gourmet and healthy hand-prepared meals delivered to the client's doorstep. Another partner is Joie de Vivre Hotels, where Living Well holds wellness and social events for its clients. We all know how important it is to keep the mind working, and Living Well finds products to stimulate and strengthen the brain that not only work but also are fun!

All the team members can keep track of each other's evaluations using up-to-date technology, with one person overseeing the whole picture. As an individual changes, the team can monitor the help and alter it according to his/her needs. This team communicates with each other and keeps the family updated through a secure web site they call a "care site." The family can also send back photos, ideas, notes or reminders about events such as upcoming family gatherings.

One satisfied client said, "By having the care, cooking, cleaning and transportation services provided by Living Well, I have the energy to truly focus on the things that bring me happiness – my hobbies and my friends."

Both co-founders, Tessa ten Tusscher and Doris Bersing, have a Ph.D. in geropsychology and 40 years of experience in the field of elder and assisted care between them. They began the company in Mill Valley two years ago but are now moving its offices to Tiburon.



As Lisa Grant looks on, Tessa ten Tusscher (left) holds a strip of individualized medication packs that Living Well gives to clients, making it easier to keep track of what pills to take. Photo: Diane Smith

The pair are picky about who they hire. “We pay well and give health insurance,” said ten Tusscher, “and we hire one out of every 50 people who apply for a job with us.”

The motto of Living Well is: “A New Model For Elder Care At Home – Where You Want To Be.” “We focus on helping the elderly age with dignity the way they want to age,” said ten Tusscher.

Prices begin around \$2,000 per month for minimum care and rise as the need for help increases. Living Well offers a Memory Screening every second Tuesday of each month. Call for information.

An Open House will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, October 4. Living Well is located at 10 Beach Road in Tiburon, next door to the post office.

To learn more about Living Well, go to <livingwellalah.com> or call 800-805-7104.

Diane Smith has been with The Ark since 1980, writing and taking photos on everything, from personalities to events.