

'Golden years' don't have to lose shine

Granite Bay company prepares to launch LEAP program

BY SCOTT THOMAS ANDERSON
GRANITE BAY VIEW

Sheila Abbasi and Pati Rader don't believe the "golden years" have to eventually lose their shine, even when seniors are combating major health issues or life-altering mental challenges.

Abbasi is the owner of The HomeCare Source, a business that provides services to seniors in Granite Bay recovering in their homes from injury, or living in their homes with Alzheimer's or dementia. Rader is a certified seniors activities



Rosita Schaechterle, left, pours tea for Hazel Johnson while Pati Rader and The HomeCare Source owner Sheila Abbasi watch in this photo illustration. The company's professional caregivers work with people in their homes, enriching their clients' quality of life by providing transportation, meal preparation, recreation, companionship and other services.

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leader with an unapologetic love for singing and theatrics.

Together, the two women are getting ready to launch a new Life Enrichment

Activity Program, or LEAP, in order to better stir the spirits of their el-

derly clients.

The obstacles many seniors face as they get

older — including personal isolation and sluggish routines — are concerns that have been near and dear to Rader since watching her late mother deal with dementia.

"Becoming sedentary and withdrawn are developments that can take someone from having everything to nothing almost overnight," Rader said. "Seniors can get very depressed. Not living in a way that's physically and mentally stimulating can really bring them down, and studies have shown their overall health will suffer."

Abbasi, who has owned The HomeCare Source since 2009, had come to the same conclusion. She was confident her care-

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givers were doing their very best to have meaningful interaction with clients, but she was also sure there was room to look for innovative ways to lift the seniors' energy levels higher.

"I think the in-home care profession generally does a great job of taking care of the clients' basic needs," Abbasi explained. "But when it comes to engaging them in activities other than just watching television, it's just very difficult."

When Abbasi met Rader, she knew she had found the right person to help develop a new element of her business. For the last year, the two have worked on designing LEAP. According to Rader, the main focus of the program is to identify and cater to the unique-



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Pati Rader, left, Hazel Johnson and The HomeCare Source owner Sheila Abbasi play with a dog in this photo illustration. The company's professional caregivers work with people in their homes, enriching their client's quality of life by providing transportation, meal preparation, recreation, companionship and other services.

ness of each senior. Rather than trying to occupy the client with general crafts like drawing or painting, the activ-

ities are geared toward his or her background.

Such highly personalized activities might include singing, baking,

bird watching, learning about historic subjects, visiting nature settings, playing board games and other endeavors that can

be done safely and responsibly.

"A lot of times, people who work in in-home care will just sit down with a senior and tell them they're going to paint or draw," Rader said. "When you think of how long our elders have lived, and all the things they've seen and knowledge they have — even if they have dementia — telling them to just sit and paint is kind of insulting. Our goal is to fill that void without coming in the home and taking over. We try to determine what they really want to do and what they'll find most enriching."

The HomeCare Source will officially launch LEAP at the start of this month. Abbasi said she's both proud and excited

by the early response from clients.

"I've been meeting with our seniors and their families, and interest in doing this is something that keeps surfacing time and again," Abbasi said. "The families want their loved ones to have activities they will truly like doing. LEAP is specifically designed for accomplishing that. Having something like LEAP is part of what's so rewarding about working with seniors — seeing them smile and still enjoy life as they're aging, and getting the most out of life when it's something they didn't think they could do."

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