

Independence: Declared Daily in Philadelphia

Helping the elderly to 'age in place.'

Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing



Edge Runners. As part of its Raise the Voice campaign, in November 2006 the American Academy of Nursing named Eileen Sullivan-Marx an “Edge Runner:” a nurse who develops cost-effective, innovative interventions or models of care that can transform an ailing health care system. Here, she speaks with a client at Philadelphia’s Living Independently for Elders Center.

In a 2007 telephone survey on attitudes toward “aging in place,” researchers at Prince Market Research asked 402 community-dwelling adults over 65 years of age what they feared most as they aged. The two most frequent responses were losing independence (26%) and moving to a nursing home (13%). Only 3% responded that they were more afraid of death. So it’s fair to say that, given the choice, most older adults would prefer living in their own homes than in a nursing home. Thanks to Eileen Sullivan-Marx, PhD, RN, CRNP, FAAN—and a team of primary care NPs, home care nurses, physicians, and therapists—a

growing number of older Philadelphians are doing just that, and they’re thriving.

As the Shearer Endowed Term Chair in Healthy Community Practice and Community Affairs at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing, Sullivan-Marx has spent her career working to improve the lives of older adults. In 1980, after eight years in hospital and community nursing, she became a primary care NP. Over the next 20 years, she launched several geriatric NP practices that still operate.

One of her most celebrated achievements is her development and direction of the Living Independently for Elders (LIFE)

Center, which is owned and operated by the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. One of approximately 50 Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly—or PACE—programs around the country, it allows frail inner-city older adults to live in their communities instead of nursing homes. Although it operates as both a capitated Medicare Advantage Plan and a comprehensive health plan, the LIFE Center doesn’t care only for members’ medical needs. It also offers physical, art, and music therapy; meals; recreational activities; respite and home care; and personal services such as laundry and hair care. The LIFE Center even provides members with transportation.

Sullivan-Marx describes the LIFE Center as “a laboratory for

us to understand better how to deliver the best care and a classroom for students.” She says that the university and the center have a symbiotic relationship, combining education and service to the community. “And our university supports us 200% in this effort,” she adds.

In 2006 the American Academy of Nursing (AAN) named Sullivan-Marx an “Edge Runner,” recognizing the LIFE Center’s embodiment of the AAN’s slogan, “innovative experiments become permanent solutions.” In its 2006 Edge Runners publication, the AAN described the center as “impressive in terms of both quality of care and fiscal performance: last year, the pro-

gram saved the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare 15% to 20% in Medicaid reimbursement costs.” Edge Runners is part of the AAN’s “Raise the Voice” campaign, which aims to increase public awareness of nursing and its focus on patients, families and communities.

Wayne Pendleton, LIFE’s executive director, says, “Eileen understands the day-to-day challenges of operating a health care entity that is also a managed health organization and the risks to an academic institution sponsoring such an organization. She knows what it takes to deliver quality care, efficiently and cost-effectively.”

Pendleton supports that

praise with Medicare-mandated data about falls resulting in fractures or hospitalization at the LIFE Center. The target is 0.8 falls per 100 member months, and the LIFE Center is at 0.5. The numbers are equally impressive for other quality measures such as skin integrity, use of ED and home health care services, member satisfaction, and use of antipsychotics.

Pendleton says that the LIFE Center is poised to grow to serve 500 or more eligible older adults in West and South Philadelphia. In the meantime, current members enjoy the benefits of round-the-clock care and the dignity that comes with maintaining their independence.—*Sibyl Shalo* ▼



Courtesy of Maureen Shawn Kennedy

In Memoriam

Nursing loses a legend.

Imogene King, EdD, MSN, RN, FAAN, 84, died on December 24, two days after suffering a stroke. King was professor emeritus at the University of South Florida and served on the advisory board of the University of Tampa. Previously she held positions at Loyola University in Chicago and Ohio State University. In the 1960s, she was the assistant chief in the research grants branch of the Division of Nursing at the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. An Iowan by birth, King spent much of her career in Florida, working to advance nursing in the state through her activities with the Florida Nurses Association and the Florida Nurses Foundation. Still, King is best known as one of the first nursing theorists, for her “theory of goal attainment.” King considered the nurse–patient relationship within a general systems theory and described nurses and patients interacting within larger

social systems in a dynamic relationship in order to achieve goals. Her text, *A Theory for Nursing: Systems, Concepts, Process*, was translated into several languages. The American Academy of Nursing named her a living legend. When she was inducted into the American Nurses Association Hall of Fame in 2004, her biography noted that King modeled nurses’ “responsibility to actively contribute to the advancement of the profession. As a result, she has personally influenced the life, community, and profession of nurses and nursing.” King is survived by a nephew and two nieces. In her honor, the Florida Nurses Foundation instituted the Imogene M. King Research Grant.—*Maureen Shawn Kennedy, MA, RN, news director* ▼