



Home Care Providers STEP INTO THE GAP

BY RENE GIBBS-THARPE

Once upon a time, children stayed in their hometowns and took care of their elderly parents as they aged. Outsourcing care for an elderly parent would have been unthinkable 60 years ago, but that reality is changing.

By 2030, 56 million Americans (20 percent of the population) will be 65+. The population of Americans 85+ will triple by 2040 and reach 19 million by 2050. With adult children increasingly

living farther away, the country is facing a crisis in eldercare. Even if adult children live nearby, chances are they are working full-time and raising a family. Sixty percent of family caregivers have jobs, meaning they often must make workplace accommodations, leading to stress. What's more, their work and family obligations often make it impossible for them to give their parents adequate care. Studies show that family caregivers without

help report poorer overall health and lost wages.

It's often at this point, when the adult child can no longer support their parent's independence, that they have "the talk." The subject of assisted living is usually an unwelcome topic, even when it's no longer practical, safe, or sustainable to live at home alone. However, staying at home and being unsafe or moving into assisted

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living and giving up independence are no longer the only options. There is a third way: finding professional home care providers.

Home care providers step into the gap for those who need assistance but are not ready to leave their homes. These providers bring a holistic approach to maintaining health and well-being for the seniors they serve. They complement healthcare by helping with invisible labor, such as laundry, light housekeeping, and meal preparation. Now they can have the best of both worlds: independence and safety.

Anne is 88 years old and, until recently, she alone cared for her husband, John, who is in the late stages of Alzheimer's. Like many in her generation, Anne was trying to care for John without outside support because she wanted to maintain her independence. Caring for John, her husband of 63 years, was a point of pride and duty. This is, after all, the greatest generation. They're not always comfortable asking for help or admitting when they need it.

Anne's family worried as their mom struggled with memory issues, didn't eat well, and made numerous hospital visits. It was clear that the stress and exhaustion of caring for their dad alone was too much. Anne's family is scattered throughout the country, making it all but impossible to give their parents the daily support they now need.

Faced with a potential crisis, Anne's family found Agape, a team of compassionate specialists trained in eldercare. Agape partners with the entire family to support Anne and John's independence, and to bring peace of mind to their family. Agape's care specialists support the family by visiting Anne and John for two hours twice a day. They help Anne maintain proper nutrition by assisting with shopping, keep a tidy living space by doing light housekeeping, and help her stay healthy by managing her medication schedule. This took a great deal of burden off Anne. She could return to some of the things that supported her health, like exercise, and that gave her joy, like reading the paper. And it took the burden off her children worrying about their parents. They are now confident that both their mother and father are in good hands, safe, cared for, and as healthy as possible.

Agape is devoted to holistic care that provides for clients' dietary needs, hygiene requirements, and basic home needs. Beyond ensuring the physical health of clients, Agape professionals support clients' social well-being by providing companionship and stimulation. To ensure compatibility, caregivers' interests are matched to those of clients.

At the end of the day, the mission is to help seniors age in place gracefully, joyfully, and with peace of mind.

Rene Gibbs-Tharpe is the founder and CEO of Agape Services LLC.



ADULT DAY CENTERS

These are nonresidential facilities providing activities for the elderly and special-needs individuals. Most centers operate 10 to 12 hours a day and provide meals, social/recreational activities, and general supervision. These centers enable caregivers to go to work or to obtain a break from their responsibilities.

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