

July Caregiver of the Month: Wildajeon Boysaw!



Caregiver Puts Her Own Health Care Needs on Hold for Loved One

Caregiver Wildajeon Boysaw, 65, needs two total knee replacements, but the surgeries will have to wait. Who would take care of her 97-year-old aunt Lena King in Kansas City if Wildajeon had to spend a couple of months in rehab?

As is typical of many caregivers, Wildajeon puts off her own health needs to care for Lena. She is also among the 25 percent of daughters who quit a job—as a well-paid, private duty sitter for patients in Topeka, Kansas—and moved back to Missouri in 1990 to care for her mother, now deceased, and then her aunt.

But Wildajeon has no regrets about her decision. “When people need help, they need help.”

Wildajeon gave up her apartment and began full-time caregiving for Lena in her home, after Lena fell several times and fractured her left knee. The falls led to numerous hospital and nursing home stays, serious bedsores and wound care. Now Lena is bedfast and waits in the wings for a specialized wheelchair from Kansas City Hospice and Palliative Care.

Meantime, a typical day for the two begins at 9 a.m.

“First thing I do is change her,” says Wildajeon. “I make sure she’s clean and dry and change the bed linen if necessary. Then I give her a sponge bath and oral care, and I wash her face and hands. I give her pain meds and make her coffee and whatever she wants to eat. She likes bacon, one egg and toast every morning, but today she wanted oatmeal.”

A nurse comes every week to check Lena’s vital signs, and an occupational therapist comes on Tuesdays and Thursdays to exercise Lena’s rheumatoid-arthritis hands.

In between therapy sessions, meals, and Wildajeon’s care, Lena sleeps and watches TV. She loves “The View” with Whoopi Goldberg, “Perry Mason” after the news, and the soap operas “The Bold and the Beautiful” and “General Hospital.”

Wildajeon laughs. “I like those shows too.”

Wildajeon has a few tips for other caregivers. “Pay attention to changes in your loved one’s behavior. My aunt started talking to people who weren’t there, who had died. I

knew she had an infection or something. Let somebody know when this happens. And try to treat everybody with respect.”