

Betty

While driving to the grocery store one day, Betty found it almost impossible to lift her foot off the accelerator and onto the brake. That frightening incident and the gradual weakening she felt led to a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis. She was 45, had three children and was working nights for the Internal Revenue Service.

Today, 26 years later, Betty is bed-bound and has multiple health problems. Many people in her condition would be in a nursing home. But she remains at home in Milford with Jim, her husband of 50 years.

It takes a lot of services for Betty's care: two home health aides through PASSPORT who come two hours in the morning and two in the evening, seven days a week; a hospice caregiver twice a week; and a nurse who comes daily to care for a pressure sore that won't heal. PASSPORT also provided home safety modifications, including wider doorways and a wheelchair ramp.

At \$27,000 a year, Betty's care plan cost is high for PASSPORT, but still about half the cost of a nursing home.

And then there's Jim. "I have caregivers four hours each day, but I have Jim for the other 20 hours," Betty said. "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him."

A former machinist, Jim met Betty on a blind date and they married six months later. His caregiving duties include helping to keep Betty connected with the outside world. They are members of Summerside Church of God which Betty used to attend several times a week. Because she can no longer go to services, her friends come regularly to read the Bible and sing.

"I'm not perfect, but I do my best," Jim said. "Betty is an inspiration to me."

Still, Betty said, Jim could not manage without the help PASSPORT provides. "I'd be in a nursing home," she said. "I came to the conclusion a long time ago that nothing is so bad that it can't be worse. We have a quality of life that we would not have without help."



Pictured clockwise (from l-r): PASSPORT client, Betty and her husband, Jim; Betty and Pam, nurse; Betty and Marjorie, PASSPORT care manager.