

Mabel's Homecoming

Nursing Home Resident Goes Home After Seven Years

Editor's Note: You may have seen this story in CICOA's custom publication in the September 13 edition of The Indianapolis Star. It's being re-run here because it conveys so well what CICOA is all about: keeping older adults at home where they most want to be.

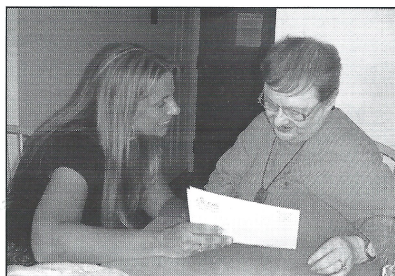
Nursing homes are perceived as "the end of the line." They're where the most fragile of us may find ourselves when we're no longer able to live on our own. For certain people, nursing home placement is appropriate. For others, though, independence – in one's own home – can be possible with just a bit of cost-effective assistance.

Mabel Gamet, 78, of Greenwood, is a former nursing home resident who is celebrating her own personal "homecoming."

"In the nursing home, I got good care. But I felt like if I had to stay there another day, I would die," said Gamet, who now lives on her own in a subsidized apartment after having spent seven years in a nursing home. She says her placement in a nursing home was the result of stress and aggravation of her early onset Parkinson's disease.

Gamet said, "My husband told me, 'I can't take care of you anymore. I'm calling the doctor and putting you in a nursing home.'"

Once there, she had to learn to walk again. Asked about that struggle, she proudly displays an award given to her by the nursing home in 1998 for progress made in her physical therapy. However, a nursing home isn't a reha-



CICOA Care Manager Carrie Cross (left) and client Mabel Gamet

bilitation hospital. It's not where a person goes to become stronger and Gamet was getting stronger – both mentally and physically.

"When I first met Mabel, I thought she was so organized and really knows what she's doing," said Carrie Cross, a CICOA care manager. Gamet called Cross because she'd heard about a fellow resident who was able to leave the nursing home. Gamet didn't know exactly how that was possible, but she made it her mission to find out. Cross went to the nursing home, met with Gamet and told her about a program that would allow her to leave the nursing home.

It didn't take long for Cross to realize that Gamet was the perfect candidate for independent living. She gave Gamet a list of subsidized housing and Gamet made the calls herself. Gamet's doctor sign the necessary paperwork stating that she was fit to leave.

"I felt she was trapped there," said Cross. "It was empowering for her to be able to say, 'I want to go home.' And it was a neat feeling for me to be able to help. It's probably the most rewarding thing I've done in my job."

Together, they moved Gamet into her Greenwood apartment on May 24. She now enjoys her independence and receives all of the services that make living at home possible for her: an emergency response system, home-delivered meals, a home health aide to help with bathing and light house-keeping and a skilled nurse who comes once a week to set up her medication for the week.

"Mabel is so independent. She's on the ball with all of her paperwork. She's made many friends. She goes to activities. She's around people like her," said Cross.

"People in the nursing home didn't think she'd be able to make it on her own after seven years and most people might think the same thing. But, she's educated and very independent. She just had a hard road to go."

INDIANA'S 49TH GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON AGING: "ENERGIZING GENERATIONS"

- December 7 & 8 at the Westin Hotel-downtown Indianapolis
- Keynote Speaker: Marc Freedman, Author and CEO, Founder of Civic Ventures
- Professional and Consumer Focused Breakout Sessions
- Continuing Education Credits (CEUs)
- Legislative Updates
- Older Hoosier Awards Banquet

"Our enormous and rapidly growing older population-commonly portrayed as a burden to the nation as a drain on future generations-is a vast, untapped social resource."

-from *Prime Time: How the Baby Boomers will Revolutionize Retirement and Transform America*, by Marc Freedman.

For more information, contact Ernestine Kasper at 317-232-7125.