

# Senior Living

ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

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## Sheltering Arms has offered century-plus years of caregiving

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RODOLFO HERNANDEZ PHOTOS

At the Sheltering Arms Day Center members (left) John Keyes dances with staffer Ora Smithers and Mack Duncan takes a turn with staffer Hazel Terrell. In the background, right, with the pink tie is Sheltering Arms president Robert Phillips.



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Martha Bautsch and Hollie Houston Cole glide by seated members (left) Florence Glenn, Arnold Walkow, Juanita Guyden and Juanita Bell.



Daisy Marshburn gets into the spirit at the once-a-month afternoon dance at Sheltering Arms Day Center.

**FACT:** According to the MetLife Mature Market Institute, a woman today — because women generally take the role of caregiver — spends more time caring for elderly family members than they do caring for their children.

In 1893, Christ Church Cathedral founded Sheltering Arms as an independent-living residence for elderly women. Since that time — as one of Houston's oldest social service agencies — Sheltering Arms Senior Services has evolved into providing meals and personal care as well as addressing other senior needs through social service case workers.

"In the 1920s, we went on to provide home care and personal assistance services," said Robert Phillips, the agency's president for the past 21 years, "and by the 1950s, we were also providing personal care, such as meal preparation, feeding and bathing, so seniors from every area of Houston could remain in the familiar surroundings of their own homes."

In the late '70s, the growing agency was asked by Work Family Directions to serve as a local partner and resource for employers and their employees.

"At that point, we also began discussions with local employers who realized their employees had more than child-care responsibilities because they also were trying to care for their elderly parents," Phillips said.

By the early 1980s, agency leaders began conversations with Houston's Alzheimer's Association and, as a result, opened the Day Center for elders with dementia and Alzheimer's disease as a collaborative effort.

A totally mission-driven, nonprofit agency, today Sheltering Arms Senior Services works to preserve the dignity and independent of Houston senior citizens, annually serving more than 68,000 seniors and their caregivers through a wide variety of services.

"What we've learned is most elderly persons want to stay in their homes," Phillips said. "We have clients living by themselves and are supported by friends, neighbors and their churches," he said.

The growing transience of our society, and women joining the workforce brought corporations across Houston to

## SHELTERING ARMS: Agency provides classes to equip caregivers with needed tools

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Sheltering Arms, asking them to assist employees responsible for caring for elder family members.

"In fact," Phillips said, "some people didn't realize they were caregivers."

**FACT:** Employees in the U.S. who are caring for an older relative are more likely to report health problems such as depression, diabetes, hypertension or heart disease, costing employers an estimated average additional health-care cost of 8 percent per year, or \$13.4 billion annually, according to the MetLife Study of Working Caregivers and Employer Health Care Costs.

"Typically, people don't have time to plan for elder care," said Carlos Ramirez, director of marketing and communications for Sheltering Arms. "Many times younger family members are in denial that Mom or Dad can't do what they once did. Then, when a family needs help with a parent or other family member — due to a fall or after a hospitalization — they need it quickly."

"One of our clients, for example, suffered a heart attack," Phillips said. "As the patient was being discharged, the doctors told her family she wasn't strong enough to stay alone ... that she would need help during the day ... and they had about two hours to find that help and care."

The client's family was

given a list of caregivers and sent on their way. A family friend recommended Sheltering Arms Senior Services.

"Most families are not even sure of what to ask," Phillips said, "and they don't know which agencies are better than others or which have the highest quality work force. All they know is that Mom or Dad need help ... so, in essence, families are already in the midst of a crisis."

"What we do," he said, "is go into the home, do an assessment of the individual and decide, with the family, if the senior needs a homemaker, or they may need a homemaker as well as help with personal care. Then, we look at the house to see if there are obstacles that can be removed to make the environment safer and easier for senior living."

Services are provided at full fee, if that's affordable for the senior, and because Sheltering Arms is non-profit and mission driven, they can provide services at sliding scale fees.

"We're the only option in Houston to provide care on long-term basis," Phillips said, "and we pay an enormous amount of attention to the quality of caregivers we hire. Then we do everything we can to create successful relationships. This and all the services we have to offer make us different from other caregivers."

**FACT:** The number of Harris Co. residents older than 65 increased 28 per-

cent and those 85 or older increased 52 percent in the last decade. The average caregiver for an elderly family member is 46 years old and female.

Because the local economic downturn has reduced program funding, Ramirez said Sheltering Arms Senior Services' two yearly fund-raising events — its upcoming 13th annual Golf Tournament in May and its annual turkey trot on Thanksgiving Day — are extremely important.

"Last November, we had just over 8,000 runners," he said, "and both special events not only help us with funding but allow us to provide educational materials to every participant," he said.

Among its services to families and companies are training classes that include a free six-week training program, "Powerful Tools for Caregivers," to help develop skills to work successfully with elderly family members. The next morning training program (10 a.m. to noon) will begin April 13. An evening program covering the same material is scheduled 6-8 p.m. April 15.

"This course equips caregivers to help seniors in their family live the lives they want — and expect to live," Phillips said.

For more information, go to [www.shelteringarms.org/calendar/Powerful-ToolsforCaregivers.php](http://www.shelteringarms.org/calendar/Powerful-ToolsforCaregivers.php) or call 713-685-6577.