



Photo by Felix Adamo

Jeanne Schamblin created Alternative Care in 1990.

## Filling a void

Alternative Care created more than 20 years ago to provide area with all home healthcare needs

Responding to the need for trustworthy, competent, trained caregivers for those who want to remain in their homes, Jeanne Schamblin opened Alternative Care in 1990 to provide caregivers who were drug/alcohol screened, background checked and physically qualified to provide that care.

That was the foundation for her business. Because the state of California has no licensure requirement for supportive home-care companies, one must carefully select the right caregiver for their loved one.

Schamblin said her business takes that selection very seriously. The company screens all caregivers for experience and fit-for-duty physicals and performs a drug/alcohol screen, a criminal and sexual molestation background checks. Employees are bonded and insured, covered with worker's compensation and paid by the company.

"Based on these practices, you know that the care will be of the highest quality delivered by competent, caring individuals."

Schamblin said. "The commitment and dedication of our employees is the strength of Alternative Care."

Many have worked with her for much of their career: 32 percent of the employees have been with her for 10 to 20 years and 25 percent from 4 to 10 years — a longevity to be envied in the home care business, Schamblin said.

Employees are trained in all forms of care, including recovery from surgery, strokes, elder care, Alzheimer's, dementia and hospice care.

Prior to the start of care, Schamblin and the Care Managers visit with the client in the home where care will be provided to answer any questions they might have. She said this free assessment enables her team to become aware of the needs, lifestyle and personality of the client, enabling them to select an appropriate caregiver. Consistency of care with the same caregiver is a priority, she said.

The "sandwich generation" is often overwhelmed when faced with caring for their own family as well as an elderly loved one. This is where Alternative Care comes in, she said. Caregivers are available from four hours to 24 hours a day as requested by the client. They assist in a variety of ways, including bathing, dressing, meal preparation, medication assistance, light housekeeping, linen

changes, laundry and companionship.

When a loved one is hospitalized and family can't be with them, Alternative Care can also provide a personal bedside attendant.

"This extra attention gives the family and their loved one peace of mind, knowing that the patient has someone at the bedside to attend to their needs and inform hospital staff and family of any concerns," Schamblin said.

Schamblin, who's an active member of the National Private Duty Association, said Alternative Care is certified by California Association of Health Services at Home.

In addition, she feels it's important that the business gives back to the community. In the past, it has supported nonprofits, such as Links for Life, ABLE, M.A.R.E., hospice programs, and the local arthritis and Alzheimer's associations.

Alternative Care expanded services to include Lifeline Response System and MedReady Automated Medication Reminder. Also in 1995, Schamblin opened a sister company, Gables Residential Care LLC, which provides three residential care homes for women who need hands-on care, constant supervision and companionship. Under the same management, The Gables, Spruce Gardens and The Meadows are licensed by the state to provide care and attention for six ladies in each home, 24-hours a day.

"If living at home is no longer feasible, these lovely homes are an excellent alternative," Schamblin said.

— *Bakersfield Life staff*

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