

# Program Can Help Aged, Blind, Disabled at Home

## 'Why send them away,' Homemaker-Home Health Aides ask?

Why send your aging one away? For generations, Americans have sung the strains of

"There is no place like home—home, sweet home."

Members of the helping professions have long known that the aging, the ill, the young, the incapacitated wither emotionally and mentally when they are sent off to be cared for by strangers, be they ever so kind.

Alaska has an agency founded on the belief that the home nurtures children and is the place where the aging generally are happiest.

Alaska Homemaker-Home Health Aide Service, Inc. is a private, non-profit, non-sectarian agency which provides in-home help to the aging, blind, disabled, motherless, and crisis-stricken by means of contracts with government agencies, private clients, and private organizations.

"We are not trying to build an empire," Mrs. Dove M. Kull, State Director explained, "but to train and supervise homemakers to work as part of a team with doctors, social workers, nurses, nutritionists, and therapists.

"Last year under a statewide contract with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services we held together two hundred homes located in towns and villages from Metlakatla to

Point Barrow."

Who are the people served?

A 71 year old man with a pacemaker. An 80 year old woman recovering from a stroke. Five children whose mother was in the hospital recovering from surgery. A cancer patient, a paraplegic, a depressed widow who attempted suicide, a blind man.

A couple who were in their 80s, married 59 years, too frail to fend for themselves, but loving their home, their neighbors, their village, and desperate at the thought of being sent off to a nursing home in which no one understands their dialect and their fondness for Native foods.

In the villages, service is provided chiefly by home helpers, untrained, who are assigned, instructed and supervised by professional representatives as State social workers, the physician in the nearby hospital, or a nurse.

The Home Helper in the village, more likely than not is Eskimo, Indian or Aleut; and more likely than not is a man because fuel is to be chopped or obtained and snow is to be brought in to melt for water.

Alaska Homemaker Home Health Aide Service, Inc. has one central office which is in Juneau, and three Regional Offices located in Juneau, Anchorage, and Fairbanks.

In these locations homemaker home health aides are trained and supervised by the staff of the Agency in coordination with related agencies involved in helping the individual or family served.

"We try to work ourselves out of a job by doing everything possible to help the clients to help themselves," according to Mrs. Patricia Fradley, Assistant Director in charge of the Fairbanks Office. "In times of stress, crisis or incapacity, families need someone in the home for comfort as well as for care," she added.

"A death, an accident, a heart attack, all of these threaten the strength of a family especially now that in many homes both the mother and father work outside of the home."

Helping a mother to give good care to her children is less traumatic and less expensive to the taxpayers than removing children from their home because of neglect.

Once removed it is hard to get them back home. A homemaker can give this kind of help because she is there and she has access to specialists.

Homemaker Home Health Aides are trained by specialists in health, mental health, nutrition, and the level of living, home management and budgeting.

They strengthen and extend the service of the nurse who instructs in oil massages and exercise; the dietitian who oversees a special diet; or the social worker who helps with mental health and emotional disturbance.

Homemaker and home helpers receive benefits as social security, unemployment, benefits, and workmen's compensation. They are mature people who are concerned about others.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has funded the training period of six weeks and travel for trainees who are Alaska Native. Vocational Rehabilitation also has helped some to be trained.

The long range plan of Alaska Homemaker Home Health Aide Service, Inc. is to train one per one thousand general population and one per hundred over 65.

More than half are Alaska Native. Some after training, return to the villages for assignments. The need has been recognized and the service has been established, according to Mrs. Dove M. Kull, Director.

What is needed now is security for clients who are cared for in their own homes and security for the homemakers who wish to make a career of their work. This requires an even

flow of contracts to prevent loss of homemakers who must work to support themselves and their families.

Generally the expense of keeping a couple in their own home is around \$400.00 a month. Nursing home care generally for a couple is \$2,500 a month.

This difference in cost was one of the chief reasons that motivated Congress to request de-institutionalization and prevention of institutionalization.

The United States population includes 21,000,000 citizens over 65, and the number is rising. Alaska's population includes 6,887 over 65. With scarcity of hospital beds and nursing home beds as well as the lack of adequate care, in-home care must be increased.

Anyone in the Fairbanks area interested in training or service, may call 452-3214.