

**Des Peres.RC**

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**From:** Pam Vaccaro [pamvaccaro@sbcglobal.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 27, 2011 9:51 PM  
**To:** Feather, Amy  
**Cc:** Des Peres.RC; Des Peres.ED  
**Subject:** from pam vaccaro (dad at Sunrise of Des Peres)

Amy,

I could not let this thanksgiving holiday end without extending my gratitude for your giving my concerns about my dad's well being such kind attention and excellent advise.

You were my first hope that my efforts to have my father's quality of life increased and secured at Sunrise might actually happen.

I have watched a bit of a miracle happen on the reminiscence floor at Sunrise of Des Peres. Ted Gillespie was hired about the same time as the meeting I had with the leadership team—late September. I have watched this man help bring my dad "back to life." He is an exceptional person who wants to really *see* the people he is serving. I think you would have to meet him, Amy, to understand what he is doing for the residents on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.

When I brought my dad to Sunrise on January 16, he was still part of a his harmonica club—going to meetings and playing their "gigs." He loves his harmonica group. Although he taught himself music at age 81, he mostly played by ear and could follow along with a cd of his colleagues playing harmonica tunes. He lived for this.

Efforts were certainly made to give my dad chances to play for the residents the first few months.

After going to the third floor, I was told that he lost interest and could no longer play. The cd was missing, his boom box moved to a communal area and his harmonica laid to rest.

His highest level of engagement was kicking a plastic beach ball with other residents. This is the point I contacted you.

On Tuesday of last week, at the invitation of Ted Gillespie, the harmonica club came to play for the residents. My dad in his harmonica uniform played right along with them for the residents. No dry eye on my part or Ted's. Ted had been able to get the boom box working, found the cd, and he had my dad playing a few weeks before the harmonica club came to Sunrise. I'm not sure I can even explain what this has meant.

I can go on about other things I've seen him do including taking a video home to watch. He had mentioned he wished he could see the lives of all the residents he worked with. I just happen to have a cd made of my dad's life for a recent birthday. It's things like that that makes me see this is not just a "job" for him. It is his passion.

I watch other residents of the third floor who are those "in-betweeners" begin to thrive with Ted's help. He is kind to every resident no matter their level of development. He "finds" them. He amazes me. His sincerity, passion, and compassion have deeply affected my dad, my family, and the others on the third floor.

My three goals:

11/29/2011

1. Have consistent contact with medical staff when changes are made.
2. Have my father involved in more assisted living (first floor) activities increased.
3. His quality of life improved and sustained.

...are being realized, Amy. Tom was helpful before he left including confronting the business manager who--I have to admit--displayed the most discourteous actions towards me I've seen at Sunrise or an place else for that matter. I appreciated his efforts, but she is non-essential personnel to me when it comes to my dad's care. I was glad the relationship with Tom could come to a mutual respect before he left.

Cliffie is responsible for hiring Ted and is positive agent in getting my dad involved in activities on all the floors. She cares about her "people."

We agree to talk once a week about my dad.

I've reported these successes to Marilyn McCormick who was the Ombudsman representative to help me with my efforts to get my dad's quality of life improved and individualized as was promised by the Sunrise of Des Peres and the Sunrise corporation.

How and facility could consider Ted's position non-essential in any way is unthinkable to me as someone who cares about her parent. We went six months without that service promised us in the beginning by Sunrise. I would not have been able to keep my father at Sunrise of Des Peres as the conditions became unacceptable by September. I never accepted it was "just the disease" that was taking my dad's vital force away. You have an employee (Ted) who saw/and sees the person, not the disease. It has made all the difference for my dad.

I am grateful to you and those at Sunrise who really care. I continue to want to be an active partner in any way that makes it easier for staff to assist my dad.

This may sound a tad "corney," but Ted is the very best present under the tree for me this Christmas. No need for any others.

Thank you and happy holidays, Amy.

Pam Vaccaro

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