



From left are (front row) Virginia Johnson, Portia Bea, Cathy Boyd, Sue Fitzgerald and Tammy McGarraher; (next row) Frank McCarthy, Ruby Cook, Monica Green, Akila Rich, Taneika Brooks, Cynthia Cogger RN, Karen Wilkins, Eayolanda Basker and Stacie Miles.

## Home health business launches new Alzheimer's care program

Visiting Angels Living Assistance Services of the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula recently launched its ACE-ANGEL (Alzheimer's Care Expert) training program at the Kilmarnock Center.

"Because our care model is one-on-one, Visiting Angels is in a very unique position to deliver the highest level of Alzheimer's/Dementia care in our community, if not in the state," said owner Frank McCarthy. "Approximately 30% our care recipients have varying forms of memory-related issues. Just sitting with them is not enough. We are committed to creating joyful moments for our clients—and for their families."

McCarthy also serves on the advisory board of the Middle Peninsula Northern Neck Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association and on the board of the Greater Richmond Chapter.

While some memory loss is considered a normal part of aging, developing Alzheimer's is not, and those with Alzheimer's live on average, another eight years once their symptoms become noticeable. One out of eight older Americans has Alzheimer's disease, and the number continues to grow. Every 68 seconds someone develops Alzheimer's.

In 2010, 130,000 persons in Virginia had Alzheimer's, which represented a 30% increase over 2000. With the aging of the population, those numbers continue to increase. Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S., the only disease out of the six without some level of hope attached to the diagnosis.

According to Sherry Peterson, chief executive officer of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Richmond Chapter, the programs such as the initiative Visiting Angels is instituting are particularly important in the rural counties of Virginia.

Census statistics show 12.2% of the Virginia population is age 65 or older. In

Middlesex County 25.2% of the population is age 65 or older; Northumberland County, 30.1%; and Lancaster, 31.2%.

The new ACE-ANGEL program is based on many different and recognized approaches by the National Alzheimer's Association. In addition, the agency will incorporate the book, *Creating Memories of Joy: A Journey for Caregivers*, by best-selling author, Joeline Brackey.

According to McCarthy, this enhanced level of training will allow them to serve their care recipients in a very intentional manner. For ACE Angels, the training will never end.

Each employee who passes the agency's initial standards will earn the ACT designation (Alzheimer's Care Trainee), he said. Upon completion of 12 additional class credits, employees will have the opportunity to become ACE Angels.

"All ACE caregivers must commit to participate in regularly scheduled ongoing Alzheimer's training and will be required to earn nine additional class credits each year," said nurse manager Cynthia Cogger, RN.

Care coordinator and community liaison Karen Wilkins and Cogger will work closely with the company's clients and families to help implement enhanced one-on-one care.

"To accomplish our vision, we want to know as much as possible about the care recipient and his or her personal history. With that information our employees will be able to make a strong connection, thereby creating moments of joy for the care recipient," said Wilkins.

"We look forward to providing more respite for the family caregiver, while enhancing the ability for the care-recipient to remain in a more structured setting at home," said Cogger.

Visiting Angels Northern Neck/Middle Peninsula has more than 80 employees and has served the area since 2008.