

Paula Lyons setting her own mold in health care administration

Cover Story

written by Maxine Session

The U.S. population is aging and the number of people reporting each type of disability rises dramatically with age. In the next ten years, the number of Americans over fifty will increase by forty percent. The Social Security administration reports that between the year two thousand and the year twenty-three, the number of Americans over the age of sixty-five will more than double, from thirty-four point eight percent to seventy point three million.

According to the Census Bureau, the Social Security Administration reports that about thirty percent of all Americans become disabled prior to retirement age. In fact, more than seventy percent will acquire a disability of some kind by the time age of seventy-five is reached.

What this indicates is in order for seniors to maintain their quality of life, alternative living arrangements are often made which range from upscale retirement communities to longterm nursing center facilities.

Paula Lyons, administrator for Twin Oaks Health and Rehabilitation Center, says she and the staff there work overtime to provide an atmosphere where residents are given the very best of care.

The staff of Certified Nurse Aids, housekeepers, nurses, social workers, physical therapists and other support staff excell at their jobs.

Paula says it is difficult to consider putting yourself or a loved one here, so the first question she asks is, "Did you look other places"?



Twin Oaks has a capacity of one hundred sixteen and maintains a steady population of one hundred or above.

Paula was born in Monroe, Louisiana and graduated Rayville High School. She attended University of Louisiana At Monroe then graduated North East Louisiana with a major in social work and a minor in psychology.

Arlon Viercant recruited her to come to work at Rusk State Hospital, so shortly after her December 1988 graduation, she packed her belongs and moved to Texas. Working as a supervisor on the substance abuse unit exposed her to the very difficult lives some people cope with on a daily basis. Many of the residents came from Harris County. Most had experienced things normally unthought of back then by those who lived, so-called, normal lives. Most would go to any length to get

the drug of their choice. It was a great feeling to work with them in getting issues settled, medication regulated and back home with their families. The sad feeling was often seeing them return to start the healing process all over again, Paula recalled.

Paula worked at RSH until their child, Lauryne, was born. After staying home with her, she went to work as a consultant for a home health consulting agency.

Paula has been at Twin Oaks since 2001. She began her career as an administrator after working a year as a social work consultant. She said, "I was very new to long-term care but the one thing I soon learned is that it is very demanding work. When I first started here the turnover rate for nurse aids was very high. They are staff that must be depended upon. Now we have a stable staff of Certified Nurse Aids. They receive their training at Tyler Junior College."

With the aging of the American population, the shortage of health care workers nationwide on all levels is rising.

Medicaid is the national health care assistance program for the poor. Financed by state governments with matching federal funds, Medicaid pays for 70 percent of elderly nursing home residents at a cost of more than \$50 billion per year—a figure that's expected to rise



substantially in the future.

Paula says she, Joyce Hopson Director of Nurses and Helen Goff Assistant Director of Nurses work as a team with the staff to meet the needs of the residents.

Paula and her husband Lawrence celebrated their eighteenth wedding anniversary July 22nd. They have a son Lawrence, Jr., daughters Lauryne and Leiyana.

The family belongs to Sweet Union Baptist Church. He is on the Deacon Board. She is a Deaconess and has worked with the youth praise dancers, "Angels of Praise", for the past five years. Jacksonville is their home.

Correction to Cover Story entitled "Lorene Williams White recalls Juneteenth of the past" page 5 end of column 2 should read:

Intergration of the late 1960s and early seventies caused the closing of many small minority businesses. The Palimino Cafe and others around the community closed one by one. Lorene's husband, Richard Williams passed away in 1975. She married Lavern White in 1980 and moved to Nebraska. They lived there until he passed away in 1980. Then she moved back to Rusk.