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Lesson Learned

Posted by *Pittsburgh Healthcare Report* on Apr 18, 2012 in *Boomers, Long-Term Care* | [0 comments](#)



Melanie Michel

There's a red Mustang in the garage of the Monongahela home where Debbie Leach resides with her long-time partner, Jim. It's easy to imagine Debbie, with her bright eyes, easy smile and quick laugh, taking the Mustang out for the sheer fun of it, perhaps with Jim or perhaps with her fellow mischief maker, her cousin Dee. Debbie is a spirited, entrepreneurial and independent person.

So what happens when illness interrupts independence?

What happened for Debbie was that she learned the necessity of letting go and of letting people she didn't know into her home and into her life. The notion of Family Hospice and Palliative Care staff making

home visits was not appealing at first, but Debbie says the most important thing she has learned to do is to ask for help.

She wants to encourage others in similar circumstances to do the same. "Don't be afraid to ask," says Debbie. "Small things make a big difference in how you feel," like when the bedding is made just right or when you're in a room with great natural light.

Melanie Michel is one of the people who quickly put Debbie at ease. As a hospice/home health aide, Melanie assists Debbie with her personal care and hygiene, which is about as exposed as one person can be to another, Debbie acknowledges. But she continues, "Melanie is genuine and caring; she's not just someone doing a 'job'. She never makes me feel like we are pressured for time."

"It's peace of mind for our family," says Dee. She reminds Debbie, "And so much better than you thought it was going to be."

Debbie agrees, "Hospice is a friendship you can count on when you really need people on your side. "

For more information about hospice care, visit www.familyhospice.com or call 1-800-513-2148.