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Adult day-care service struggles to start
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Mission Arlington is in need of donations and help to open the center by fall.

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ARLINGTON - The director of an adult day-care center is asking for community donations and help to complete the center's opening by fall.

Millie Roberts, who was recently named director of Adult Day Services of Mission Arlington, is asking for funding, donated items and construction help. The 5,000-square-foot storefront at 2117 Roosevelt Drive, Suite B, in Dalworthington Gardens is scheduled to open Oct. 1, a month later than originally planned. Roberts attributes the delay to the need for money.

"We have a supply list out," Roberts said. "We are needing handymen and supplies donated to get the center completed."

Roberts said the center hopes to accommodate everyone who asks for help, regardless of their ability to pay for the service. She plans to use scholarships from area churches to cover costs. Tillie Burgin, director of Mission Arlington, said that churches have informally agreed to provide the support, but specific details have not been established.

Though the space has been leased, Mission Arlington is just beginning to "rehab" the space, Burgin said. "We are desperately in need of volunteers and support to complete the work."

Roberts' wish list includes about \$4,000 in lumber supplies, electrical, heating and air conditioning needs, plumbing equipment, floor and ceiling coverings, handicap equipment, appliances and cabinets. The furnishings list includes items from chairs and tables to a television and piano. In addition, medical supplies such as stethoscopes and wheelchairs are needed.

When completed, the center can accommodate 60 adults. Volunteers from area churches will staff the center on a weekly basis, with each church providing people for one to three full-day shifts per week. Hours will be 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The center will have two paid positions - Roberts, the director, whose \$25,000 annual salary is paid by a grant, and a full-time nurse. Roberts will not begin accepting a salary until September, when the center nears completion, Burgin said.

The service will be open to any Arlington adult, 18 and older, who needs the care. Besides assisting the elderly, the center will also provide services for victims of head injuries or debilitating diseases.

"This is for families who want to care for their loved ones at home, but they need a respite from full-time care, or they must work," Roberts said. "It's an alternative to full-time nursing home care. The service would be by appointment of course, because there is medical paperwork. Many clients would be full time, but some would come on a scheduled basis."

Roberts, who was a Mission Arlington volunteer for five years before becoming director of the new service, said she believes both the patients and the caregivers need the service.

"My father-in-law died of a bleeding ulcer while caring for his wife, who had Alzheimer's. If he had had some relief from the strain, I think he would have lived longer," she said.

Roberts said that Arlington needs the service and that she expects the mission to open other sites.

Charline Stowers, a manager for the Texas Department of Human Services, said the number of adult day-care facilities in the state has increased. Texas had 196 facilities licensed for adult day care on July 1, with a capacity for 13,424 clients. Last year, the state had 167 sites and a capacity of 11,207 clients.

PHOTO(S): Rex Curry

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