

# The Citizen of Laconia

*The voice of New Hampshire's Lakes Region*

## **Maintaining independence while living with MS**

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*NURSE Lisa Wareing-Clark of Live Free Home Health Care, gets ready to check the vitals of patient Jim Lessard of Laconia.*

*HARRISON HAAS/CITIZEN LACONIA*

November 21, 2012 -- Having independence and being in your own environment does wonders for the mind, spirit and heart. Just as Jim Lessard.

Living with Multiple Sclerosis for a number of years, Lessard knows all too well that his life would be so much different if not for the care he receives from several visiting nurses from Live Free Home Health Care of New Hampton.

Diagnosed with MS when he was 26-years-old, Lessard's health began declining over the years. However his mobility took a drastic turn in 2009 following a bout with Stage 4 pressure ulcers. He was hospitalized for four months and lost a significant amount of his mobility.

Now confined to a motorized wheelchair, Lessard is completely dependent on family and nurses to care for him. Everything from bathing to dressing to feeding, Lessard must trust and rely on those who care for him.



*VISITING NURSES Kathy Willette, left, and Lisa Wareing-Clark, plant a big kiss on the cheeks of Jim Lessard of Laconia during a recent visit to his home.*  
*HARRISON HAAS/CITIZEN*

“I still haven't fully recovered from that loss and I don't know if I ever will,” he said.

Without the services provided by the visiting nurses of Live Free Home Health Care, Lessard is well aware he would be living in a nursing home.

“I don't think I could handle that. Living in a nursing home, I don't think I could,” said Lessard, who went on to say that remaining at home “That's worth a lot of bucks to me.”

Lessard is completely dependent on the support of the nurses who care for him. A nurse comes first thing in the morning to get him up from bed, bathed and to have breakfast and lunch. A nurse from another agency comes in the late afternoon and a second nurse from Live Free Home Health Care comes by to take the night shift.

Kathy Willette, LNA, has been working with Live Free Home Health Care for about two years. She comes each morning to help Lessard start his day off right.

“I love coming to Jim's. I work with him every day, except Fridays,” said Willette, adding that the pair have developed a great bond. “Jim and I joke around all the time.”

Married 44 years, Maureen and Jim Lessard moved to New Hampshire in 1977 from their native state of Massachusetts.

“Jim used to vacation up here as a kid with his parents. He always said 'when I get married I wanted to live in New Hampshire,’” said Maureen.

When their youngest child was still a baby, the couple packed up their belongings and moved north. Through the years, the couple had two children and now enjoy life with five grand children.

Maureen said having nurses care for her husband gives her great peace of mind.

“The agency has been terrific,” she said. “I work full-time but when I leave, I know he's taken care of and he's safe.”

She added that the bond that has been created is one that is special and means a great deal to everyone in the Lessard family. She said they are trained to know exactly how to lift her husband's spirits on those “down” days when Jim is struggling a bit more and needs some extra motivation to get going.

On this particular day, Jim was watching, from the large living room window, a tree cutting crew work to remove a couple trees and sagging limbs from the back yard of their Laconia home. One tree had been damaged from the recent wrath of Hurricane Sandy while the other tree and branches had been nuisances. Simple things such as this, Jim said, he is grateful for enjoying in his own home.

Visiting nurse Lisa Warring Clark stopped in for a routine health check on Lessard. Blood pressure and temperature were taken and Warring-Clark checks some of Lessard's mobility of his fingers. She asks questions about how he's been feeling. She's been caring for him over the last eight months and said she really looks forward to seeing him each week.

Warring-Clark has clients that she sees weekly and others monthly. She averages 20 visits/patients each week who have a wide range of needs.

Lessard said he enjoys spending his days surrounded by his family. During the warmer months, he's usually outside enjoying the sunshine and fresh air.

“I do a tremendous amount of watching TV but lately more CD music,” he said.

One of his nurses made him a CD collection of all of his favorite music, which he has been enjoying greatly.

Lessard said he is very thankful for those around him. Having the same nurses each day and week have proven very beneficial in developing the close bond – both for him and for his family.

“I've been lucky. I get the same people all the time,” he said.

“My experience with this company has been very, very good, right from day one,” said Lessard. “It's a very well run company and their employees are all very well trained and very sympathetic to the needs of me.”