

# Home Caregivers Learn to Cook

By Jennifer L. Boen  
of The News-Sentinel  
May. 02, 2009



**Dorian Maples, co-owner of Angel Corps and Home Nursing Services in Fort Wayne, holds the cooking manuals developed in a culinary arts course, taught by Ivy Tech, that was designed specifically for the agency's home caregivers.**

According to the Family Caregiver Alliance, nearly eight in 10 people who need assistance for such things as bathing and meal preparation are living at home or in community settings, not in nursing homes. The demand for personal care attendants - caregivers who are not nurses or nursing assistants - is expected to grow nearly 30 percent by 2016, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Dorian and Rick Maples, owners of Angel Corps and Home Nursing Services, see firsthand the need as calls come daily from families and individuals looking for a caregiver. Angel Corps provides attendant care services. In addition to nursing care, Home Nursing Services provides home health aides, whose training allows them to do more hands-on client care than what an attendant caregiver does.

"Probably the most common complaint we get from clients is that caregivers, particularly younger ones, don't know how to cook," said Rick Maples. Microwaved food is not what most older clients want.

"We've had clients express concern that the aide cannot make coffee or fix an egg," Dorian Maples said. So they sought a solution. Dorian Maples came up with a plan to develop a cooking and nutrition course for employees. She turned to Ivy Tech Community College, where Kathy Shrock, project consultant in the Workforce and Economic Development Department, saw a good fit between the college's Culinary Arts program and Angel Corps/Home Nursing Services' needs.

Ivy Tech's Beth Scholer, who has degrees in food science and culinary arts, was the ideal person to help develop the custom course, which needed to be short and basic but include nutrition education and food safety as well as cooking instruction.



**Scholer: Developed culinary course**

Food is one of the most important things for older adults, Dorian Maples said. It's not just about "the smells, the appearance. It can generate memories and increase appetite." Nutrition is crucial for the immune system and for maintaining a healthy weight, for skin integrity and other important health needs.

Scholer's custom-designed, 12-hour class for the agency has four components: Unit 1 is on personal hygiene, kitchen sanitation and food safety; Unit 2 is on basic nutrition, and preparation of breakfast foods and beverages; Unit 3 is planning a balanced meal, how to put together a grocery list, and nutrition education about grains and pastas, and food options for healthy snacks; Unit 4 is on cuts of meat and healthy ways to prepare them, make-ahead meals, and table settings and presentation of the food.

"I learned a lot of different things such as the degree of temperature different food should be cooked," said Johanna Barrera, administrative assistant and a part-time caregiver for Angel Corps. Barrera was among the first 15 employees who completed the course last month. A big hit for all was learning fancy napkin folding.



**Johanna Barrera of Angel Corps home care services prepares pancakes, scrambled eggs and toast for client Fred Murray. Barrera and other Angel Corps employees recently completed a culinary arts course that covered food safety, nutrition and preparation. By Ellie Bogue of The News-Sentinel**

Students met three hours, once a week. The initial class was made up of people in leadership roles, including human resources directors from the agency's outlying offices so they would know firsthand what employees will learn. Caregivers must be employed for the agency for at least three months before they take the course, which is paid for by Angel Corps/Home Nursing Services. The second group of employees will start the course in a few weeks.

When the culinary arts-trained caregivers go into homes, they will have a notebook for each client that includes the clients' favorite recipes as well as copies of the nutritional and cooking information provided in the course. The agency will soon be setting up a full kitchen in its main offices at 528 W. Washington Blvd. so employees can practice their skills. A skills test will be given to ensure they meet the agency's standards and goals.

"I think this will be important for (employees) to see that this is something they should learn," said Monika Gentry, client services coordinator for Angel Corps' Bluffton office.

Dorian Maples said the culinary arts training gives her home care business a competitive edge but more importantly, "It's giving our clients what they want and need" — good food that's well prepared and pleasing to the eye and the palate.



**Client Fred Murray butters the pancakes that Johanna Barrera of Angel Corps home care services prepared for him. Barrera is one of 15 Angel Corps/Home Nursing Services caregivers who completed a custom course called Culinary Arts For The Home Care Professional at Ivy Tech Community College. Photos by Ellie Bogue of The News-Sentinel**