



## Profile: Kay Fabish Johnstown, PA

It's the first Monday afternoon of the month in Johnstown, PA., and for 84-year-old Kay Fabish, that means she will do what she's relished doing just about every first Monday for six years. The widowed grandmother of 11 and great-grandmother of seven will travel three miles through the town's historic streets to the Johnstown Senior Center on Main Street where she'll meet with kindred spirits to join in one of the most rewarding activities of her senior years – participating in a quilting club.

This is, however, no ordinary quilting club. Kay and a handful of other women, all members of the PALS® Quilting Club, stitch together warmth, care and friendship for fellow senior citizens, none of whom they've ever met. PALS – “People Able to Lend Support” – is an organization that enables seniors to lend a hand to less-able seniors in a variety of ways. It is a unique program offered by SecurityBlue<sup>SM</sup>, Kay's Highmark Medicare Advantage health insurance plan.

Kay and her companions quilt “lap robes,” which they distribute to residents of nursing homes and personal care residences in Cambria County. The group has delivered the lap robes to nearly 20 facilities to date, and it set a record in July of 2008 when it provided 79 lap robes to one facility, the Golden Living Center in Johnstown, all in one visit.

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### More than 3,000 Quilts

Since 1997, PALS quilting clubs across western Pennsylvania have donated more than 3,000 quilts. Johnstown's club has made nearly 1,000 quilts in the last six years.

“We love seeing the faces in the nursing homes as we deliver the quilts,” says Kay. “They like knowing that someone thought enough to make something for them. They say, ‘I can't pay you for this,’ and we tell them that it's a gift. We spend some time talking with each of the people we give a quilt to, and it's just a very nice feeling for everyone involved.” In that way, the quilts the PALS volunteers stitch together add up to much, much more than a collection of fabric and materials for those who receive them.

### Silent Donors in the Neighborhood

The way neighbors in the community silently participate is just as touching. “I've been finding material on my back and front porches for years,” explains the silver-haired, green-eyed Kay. “People know we do this and just donate material. There are many silent partners in the community coming together to help make this program happen.”

### A Unique Highmark Program

Highmark created the PALS program a decade ago for members of its Medicare Advantage and Medigap plans, including SecurityBlue, FreedomBlue<sup>SM</sup> PPO, FreedomBlue PFFS and MedigapBlue<sup>SM</sup>. PALS is a “volunteer service credit program” providing free, nonmedical help to members of Highmark's plans through other trained, carefully screened members.

In addition to special clubs, such as the quilting club, PALS matches those needing services with volunteers who can help. Volunteers earn “credits” for each service they provide. These service credits can be exchanged for PALS-sponsored

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help of their own, donated to another member or redeemed for food certificates. Volunteers help others with transportation, errands, basic yard work, minor home repairs, walking, feeding pets, reading and friendly visits or telephone calls.

But just as important are the intrinsic rewards and benefits. Performing volunteer work is associated with better health, much like a well-balanced diet, regular exercise and a healthy social life.

Since the inception of PALS, more than 1,000 PALS volunteers have made more than 18,255 visits to other seniors, often older or less healthy and mobile.

### **A Long-Term Member of Highmark SecurityBlue**

Kay Fabish is a long-term member of Highmark's SecurityBlue Medicare Advantage HMO. Medicare Advantage plans, offered exclusively through private insurers, offer their members greater choice than traditional Medicare. Key benefits beyond traditional Medicare include preventive health programs such as access to SilverSneakers®, a national program designed for people with Medicare who want to improve their strength, flexibility and endurance. Additional benefits may include coverage for Part D prescription drugs, routine hearing, vision and dental care, as well as special programs such as Highmark's PALS program – all with low monthly premiums and affordable copays for services.

### **A Joy and a Highlight**

For Kay, meeting with fellow PALS members has been a joy and a highlight of her retirement years. The members of the quilting club individually work on the quilts at home, then join together monthly at the Johnstown Senior Center to sign the quilts, "PALS Quilting Club," and also to fold them and tie them with a ribbon. "We put each of them together at home and meet once a month to put the finishing touches on them," explains Kay. Of course, the final touch is the wonderful human touch when the club members warmly deliver the lap robes to fellow seniors, who delightfully and gratefully accept.

*Keystone Health Plan West and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield are health plans with a Medicare contract with the Federal government.*

