

Educating Seniors: Bring Your Health... Home

A Monthly Column by Kimberly Harmon RN, BSN

“I Like Mike”: A Candidate Who Shares My Passion for Quality, Affordable Home Health Care

Normally I don't write about politics. But when politics—be it on Capitol Hill, Beacon Hill or Bancroft Hill—potentially affects your access to and ability to pay for home care, I'm going to tell you about the who, the what and most importantly—the why.

In this column you'll discover some notes and thoughts from my recent meeting with Michael Moore, candidate for State Senate (representing Worcester's Second District, including Auburn, Milbury, Grafton, Leicester, Shrewsbury, Upton and Worcester Wards 5-8).

Born and raised in Milbury, Mike is a committed public servant: His resume includes 8 years as a Selectman and he's served for the past three and a half years in the Worcester County Sheriff's Department. He's been in public services all his life, has 25 years in law enforcement, and with this run for State Senate he believes he's got plenty of productivity ahead.

With that productivity in mind, I met with Mike at his request. From our discussion it's clear that Mike cares deeply for issues that affect seniors. I was impressed by his grasp on the issues as well as his genuine pledges to work to make sure seniors get safe, affordable and quality care, when and where they want and need it.

Like me, Mike believes there are five local issues of utmost significance for seniors:

- 1) Affordable home heating: Seniors shouldn't be economically forced to choose between prescription drugs and heated homes. Mike wants to broaden access to emergency home heating assistance available through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- 2) Access to health care: Right now on Beacon Hill there's a proposal to increase the fares for para-transit routes; Mike opposes this proposal. In fact, he advocates the opposite: If possible, expanding para-transit routes so normally home-bound seniors can get out more often.
- 3) Keeping property taxes down: Based not just on economics but also on his heart, Mike understands that often the best, most comforting place to be cared for is in your own home. It's no surprise that Mike supports state funding of local property tax exemptions for seniors.
- 4) Maintaining the Prescription Advantage Program. Mike fully supports maintaining the Commonwealth's prescription drugs program, and “if we can secure the resources, expanding it.”
- 5) Supporting the Commonwealth's Elder Abuse Hotline.

As an Assistant Deputy Superintendent at the Worcester County Sheriff's Office in charge of senior citizen issues, Mike has an award-winning track record of identifying and addressing elderly public safety concerns.

He's been recognized by the Worcester County Retired Senior Volunteers Program for his efforts in creating the Worcester County TRIAD program. He's also helped to implement more than 10 different healthcare, identity theft prevention, personal safety, and 9-1-1 access initiatives throughout Worcester County.

For example, in Grafton, Mike spearheaded the implementation of a lifesaver registry program for seniors, making it easier for emergency response providers to render appropriate services when necessary.

Mike shares my belief that home care plays an important role in improving seniors' quality of life. He understands that if and when government finds the resources to make available home care for seniors—rather than being hospitalized—health care will be more affordable for seniors.

In one of our follow-up conversations, Mike said: “If I'm fortunate enough to be elected, I'm going to work with providers like Harmon to make sure seniors get quality health care. I want to be able to contact someone who can give me directions and guidance so I have resources to determine viable solutions to these important challenges.”

Massachusetts' State Primary Election Day is September 16. I encourage each of you to get out and vote—the votes you cast in September and again in the Presidential election in November will play an important role in determining the future of your health care—whether at home, at a hospital, or at a long-term care facility. So vote!

Remember, the essence of home health care is to provide individuals, families and loved ones with services that promote maximum comfort and independence in the home.

Kimberly Harmon is the Founder & CEO for Harmon Home Health, Inc. She may be reached at kharmon@harmonhomehealth.com or 508-791-5600, and welcomes any questions, comments or concerns about any specific health issues you have.