



A Labor of Love

Photos and story by **STEPHANY D. MILLER**

Cynthia Williams improves the lives of the elderly one day at a time.

Cynthia Williams listens to Peg McMahon, a resident at St. Camillus, reminisce about the days when she worked at Syracuse University, while looking at McMahon's memory book.



“All the residents are my family,” Williams said. “Some days I walk in the door sad and they put a big smile on my face. I had one lady that asked me to come in and do her showers on my days off, and I did it because this job is about love and caring for these people.”

In a perfect world, Cynthia Williams would never leave B-Unit at the St. Camillus Health and Rehabilitation Center. She would constantly be providing care while watching over all the residents and certified nurses aids.

If nurse supervisor Jeffery Emlaw had his way, all of the certified nurses aids on his unit would be exactly like Williams.

“I would like to clone her,” Emlaw said. “If I could have 10 more of her that would be wonderful; I’m grateful for Cynthia.”

Emlaw said CNAs are employed as the main hands-on caregivers for the residents. Emlaw explained that a CNA’s job is to dress, toilet, and assist with feeding, and anything else the residents need to function on a daily basis.

“I rely on Cynthia as a right hand person,” Emlaw said. “She sees things on a first hand basis that I might not get to or be able to see.”

Ellen Somers, the Alzheimer’s services coordinator at St. Camillus,

said like a lot of nursing homes, St. Camillus is not adequately staffed, but the employees work hard to provide proper care for the residents.

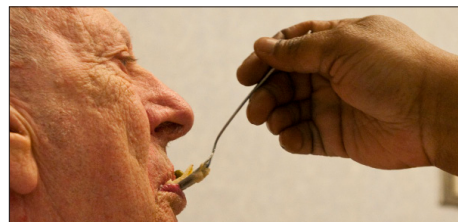
Williams is one of St. Camillus Health and Rehabilitation Center’s CNAs that does her best to provide proper care for the residents even though her workload is double the standard amount.

“All I would like to see is more people to help us on the units,” Williams said. “There are four CNAs on a unit with 40 residents, where it should be one CNA to every five residents.”

Most certified nurses aids have particular residents that they care for every time they work, Somers said.

“The CNAs do some of the most intimate type of care for the residents, so a lot of times they become like their family,” Somers said.

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Williams feeds Nick Baratta, a resident since 2006. Baratta is fed all his meals by the staff because he is unable to feed himself.

Williams takes time from her work to share a laugh with resident Ted Purtell. Some residents spend a majority of their day sitting in the doorway of their room, enjoying the company of whoever passes by.

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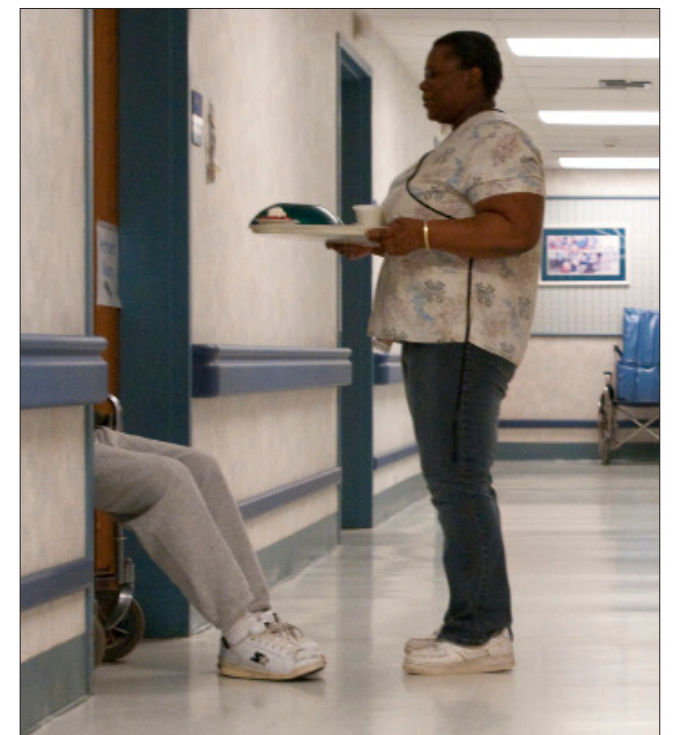
Emlaw admitted that even though he and his staff do their best to provide a high level of care for St. Camillus’ residents, they too have failed certain aspects of the Department of Health’s annual inspections.

“St. Camillus does their part very well,” Williams said. “Every facility has their breaking points, but all the years that I have been here St. Camillus has treated their residents very well.”

Williams said the residents are always doing activities and St. Camillus has many programs to make sure the residents are not lying down all day or bored.

Sharon Thomas, a volunteer caregiver for Ted Purtell who is a resident at St. Camillus, said, “This is a good place.”

“I know people who have had family in other nursing homes and they



Williams delivers dinner to a resident in his room. All the residents can choose where they eat their meals.

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Pauline Reilly, resident for a year, lovingly hugs and kisses Williams. Williams said CNAs “need to put in their mind that they’re going to treat these people how they want to be treated, which is loved. I put a lot into my job because I want to be loved the same way.”

