

Betty and her brother Willie: A Trenton ICH-NJ success story



When Betty Willis learned her brother Willie Sanders was in a Trenton nursing home, she knew she had to be his champion. She was his younger sister and only sibling. Willie, 68, was getting injections in his eye every two weeks from an outside health provider.

But the onset of COVID and lockdown restrictions meant they weren't letting anybody leave the nursing home. That put an end to his eye injections – which left him in danger of losing his eyesight. That's when Betty knew he had to come out of that facility. She started making phone calls.

“The facility social worker came and went. They were no help,” said Betty, a Trenton resident like Willie. “But then I got hold of Mr. [Leonard] Parry,” I Choose Home NJ Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator. “I told him I was in need of help.”

He explained about I Choose Home NJ, a Medicaid program designed to move people out of nursing homes and other facilities into independent community settings with appropriate supports.

“He told me ‘I will help you as much as I can,” she said. Parry sent her a list of apartment complexes that might take Willie. He talked her through the process of applying for Medicaid/Money Follows the Person. “Mr. Parry told me ‘You got to jot everything down.’”

With his help, she applied for an apartment on Willie's behalf and made other necessary arrangements – such as getting Willie's birth certificate from the nursing home manager and restoring his Social Security card - to transition him out of the nursing home.

Through her efforts and his intervention, Mr. Sanders was able to move in October 2020 into a Trenton apartment complex across town from her. Betty set him up with a TV, furniture and a microwave, Meals on Wheels and a welfare caseworker.

She meets him in the apartment stairway periodically to pick up any mail she needs to respond to, such as bills.

Willie likes his new home: “It's nice and quiet. I got my own space.”

This has allowed him to further his medical treatment, including continued eye injections. “He's doing great now,” his sister said. I got him his Medicaid card and a doctor whom he goes to see.”

If you are interested in learning more, please call ICHNJ at 1-855-466-3005 or visit the ICHNJ website at www.ichoosehome.nj.gov

