



## Angel of the Month: Christine Kemiyoondo

Visiting Angels Newton/Canton is delighted to award Christine Kemiyoondo Angel of the Month for September 2020. This is Christine's second time receiving this honor since joining our team in August of 2013. She was also Angel of the Month for November 2015. With over twenty-three years of experience as a professional caregiver, Christine exemplifies the meaning of a "care" giver with her professionalism, thoughtful nature, calmness, and commitment to her clients.

Amazingly, Christine can recall many details of her time with each and every client, including her first in 1997. At the time, Christine lived in Los Angeles, California, holding down two jobs. In the evenings, she worked as a public transit bus driver. As a first-time professional caregiver, Christine provided live-in, private care to a 30-year-old woman who was paralyzed and required ADL assistance. Although Christine now lives in Massachusetts, she and her former client remain in touch to this day.

In 1999, Christine moved across the country after encouragement from several family members to join them here. She became a Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) through the Red Cross and worked for various agencies until her cousin, Lillian Kiraso (another of our star Angel of the Month caregivers), urged her to join Visiting Angels Newton/Canton.

One experience with a former client speaks not only to the depth of Christine's compassionate nature but also to the complete commitment and dedication she has to each person she assists. Her story is relevant to the issues we continue to face as a society. She was hired as a live-in caregiver for a senior woman whose husband could no longer handle the tasks involved in her day-to-day care. Their adult children were incredibly supportive of Christine and grateful for her skills and abilities. Their father, however, was racist and would not acknowledge Christine at all. The children urged her to join the family at the table for dinner each evening. They positioned their father so he would not have to look directly at Christine. Although she was incredibly uncomfortable each evening, she sat quietly next to her client,

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remaining professional and taking care of her needs. As each day passed, her client's husband became less and less vocal about his discomfort with Christine. One evening, her client was rushed to the hospital, and Christine stayed behind at the house while other family members, including the husband, followed. At the hospital, her client was distraught because Christine was not there. To Christine's surprise, the husband called and desperately asked her to join them at his wife's bedside. After the client passed, Christine packed up to leave the family home, but the husband stopped her. He implored her to stay and told her he needed her help; all the contempt was gone. Her client's husband, in the last months of his life, realized that he appreciated and respected Christine on a human level. She cared for him until he passed a few months later.

When asked what led her to become a professional caregiver, Christine said, "My grandmother. I was her primary caregiver when I was young. I loved her dearly, and we were very close. My grandmother walks beside me as I have taken care of each of my clients. What I do for others comes from love. I give a piece of myself to them."

"Christine is the caregiver every case manager dreams to have on her case," Case Manager Elizabeth Quagraine said. "She is a committed, knowledgeable, skillful, reliable, and such a kind, happy, funny, and warm person. She sets the bar high for other caregivers to follow. We are so fortunate to have her as a member of the Visiting Angels team."

Christine shared that she is incredibly appreciative of the staff for treating her with love and kindness through the years. She described Elizabeth, who is the Case Manager for her present client, as "so quick on her toes" and said, "she has the biggest heart, works so hard, and makes sure that I have what I need for my client and myself."

When asked what advice she would give another caregiver, Christine shared, "You must be patient and listen carefully to your client. Prepare yourself and make a plan based on your client's needs, and above all else, believe in the importance of what you do to help others. Do not be afraid to ask for guidance and support from the Visiting Angels staff when you need it, especially the client's case manager, and your client's loved ones, when possible."

When Christine is not providing exceptional care to her clients, she loves to watch movies and read novels. Her daughter is an English major in college and hopes to become a journalist or a writer after graduation. For now, Christine keeps up with family members through FaceTime and phone calls. She is looking forward to family gatherings with food, laughter, and quality time together in the future.

Christine, we are truly grateful to you for your compassionate, knowledgeable, dedicated work throughout the years. You are an incredibly valuable member of the Visiting Angels Newton/Canton team. It is our honor to award you, Angel of the Month for September 2020.