



Angel of the Month: Christine Sylfrin

We are extremely honored to award Christine Sylfrin Angel of the Month for September 2021. As one of **Visiting Angels** Newton/Canton's first caregivers, Christine helped launch us on the path towards being one of the area's top home care agencies. She celebrated her 17th anniversary with us this past June, and she remembers her interview with agency founder Barney Freiberg-Dale fondly.

Christine has worked for us continuously over the years and has been an incredible caregiver for eighteen clients, most of which have been long-term assignments. Christine has been entirely dedicated and committed to each of our clients in her care.

Christine said, when asked about her experience working with our office team, "Julie is fantastic to work with! She listens to any concerns I may have and supports me in every way. I also have been thankful for Joanne's help and kindness. I have loved working for **Visiting Angels**." Christine shared, "The staff has been great, and the case managers are really involved."

Christine is no stranger to accolades and awards for the outstanding quality support she provides as a professional caregiver. She was given Angel of the Month by Barney in October 2010, with a surprise party at her client's house. In 2011, she won the *National Caregiver Award* at the 41st Annual Home Care Association Celebration by the Mass Council Home Care Aide Services. She has also received countless *Caught in the Act of Caring* and *Home Care Pulse Caregiver Excellence* awards from us through the years.

Continued on next page

A Genuine Angel

Julie McBain, Director of Client Services, considers Christine “a genuine angel.” She says, “I love working with Christine. I know she will provide the best assistance when she is on a case. I know she will notify me right away if there is a change in our client’s health and will quickly make adjustments as needed. I never have to worry about a client in Christine’s care.”

“The Director of the Memory Care unit at Springhouse Senior Living commented to me during a phone call recently that she was impressed with the connection Christine developed with our client who resides there in the short time she was with her. She said to me, ‘The caregiver you had come on Sunday was wonderful. She got your client to every activity we offered. Christine also participated in the exercises with your client to keep her engaged.’”

Encouraging a client to join in activities may be difficult for others, but it seems to come quite naturally to Christine. She has an experienced ease about her where she can comfort and provide physical and mental stimulation that is so necessary and soothing to our clients.

“Christine and I first worked together with one of my clients in 2011. This client had dementia and several other health challenges,” Julie shared. “Barney recommended that I assign Christine to the case. Her compassion and skills for taking care of him were outstanding, and she also was able to put his concerned wife at ease. She guided him through the exercises his physical therapist prescribed, and she also compassionately and patiently assisted him with activities of daily living tasks.”

Christine has gone above and beyond her job description on many cases. She worked with Julie for our dear client from the beginning of services in 2013 until her passing in August 2021. Christine lovingly cared for our client through many health changes over the last eight years.

“The first thing written in this client’s care plan was ‘Must love dogs,’” Julie said. “Christine grew to adore our client’s dogs. Our client trusted Christine exclusively with taking her “sons” to their vet appointments and with their care. I also fondly remember a time when I went to our client’s house for a check-in visit after she had been discharged from the hospital. I had the pleasure of watching first-hand Christine engaging with her. A physical therapist had given our client a unique exercise –the Cha-Cha-Cha dance. She would call out to Christine and say, ‘It’s Cha-Cha-Cha time!’ Then the two of them would dance together. Sometimes Christine would dance alone for her to cheer her up and help motivate her. That is another example of the fun, and caring relationship Christine and our client developed. It is always uplifting and inspiring to watch Christine work her magic!”

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Professional Background

Christine realized she wanted to dedicate her life to helping others while caring for her mother in Haiti when she was twenty years old. “My mother suffered from the effects of a stroke when I was younger,” Christine said. “I would care for her every morning prior to heading to work and relay her needs to my siblings before they would arrive to assist her.” Christine obtained her HHA certification in 1992, soon after arriving in Massachusetts with her twin sister. She began working with the HealthForce agency and took cases with them for twenty-eight years while also working for us until they closed in 2020. She has received hospice and dementia care certifications and has been fully committed to learning best practices for supporting seniors. Christine has valued her time as a professional caregiver, sharing, “I love spending time with the elderly, helping them to be comfortable. I have also very much appreciated the flexibility being a caregiver allows me. I make my own schedule and can balance family life with work life.”

Sound Advice

Christine has many years of experience with clients with advanced dementia. She shares some sound advice, “You have to be so patient with someone who has dementia, and it is true, you really must learn how to redirect them when they become agitated. It is important to reassure someone who has dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. As you learn about their behaviors and what may upset them, you can begin to plan ahead and figure out what calms them down.” She recommends, “Take your client for a walk or find something else for them to do if they are refusing a task, and then revisit it once they’re calm. I will take my clients for walks, help them engage in exercise classes and as many activities as possible.” Christine emphasized the importance of committing fully to the job. She says, “Treat your client as you would want your mother or father to be treated and do everything you can to make them comfortable.”

On a Personal Note

Christine enjoys visiting her sister, who works as a medical administrator at a local hospital, and having lunch with her a few days a week. She has a son and a daughter, and two grandchildren. She adores her grandchildren and cooking, which works out nicely because they love her food! “One of my favorite things to do is shop for ingredients at the supermarket,” Christine told us. “I really like to cook for my family.” Christine also likes resting and relaxing and is looking forward to retiring with her sister in a couple of years.

With Great Appreciation

Christine, we are so grateful to you for your loyalty, dedication, and the outstanding care you have been providing to our clients for seventeen years (and counting!). We are delighted to award you Angel of the Month for September 2021. We sincerely appreciate and value your skills, professionalism, warm disposition, and empathetic nature.