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## Care centers provide fun for elders, relief for family

### Demand has nearly doubled since 2002

By Misti Crane  
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Walk into Heritage Day Health Center on Livingston Avenue and you might think you're at a party.

Motown music plays. Game-players hoot, holler and talk some smack.

It's an ordinary afternoon, though, in one of the increasingly common adult day centers throughout the nation. Among other things, the centers keep older Americans active and engaged during the day while their caregivers work or take a break to tend to life's other demands.

Since 2002, demand for adult day services has nearly doubled, according to a recent study by the MetLife Mature Market Institute, Ohio State University researchers and the National Adult Day Services Association.

Centers now serve more than 250,000 people, the researchers found. Many have Alzheimer's disease or dementia and live with children or spouses who work.

Most centers have professional nurses on staff, and many employ social workers, the researchers found.

"It's good news from the standpoint of there being more options for older adults and their families and for younger adults with intellectual disabilities," said Keith Anderson, who led the study with Holly Dabelko-Schoeny. Both are assistant professors in Ohio State's College of Social Work.

The centers not only give people a place to go, they also help with health concerns and can alert clients and their doctors to problems. And they give caregivers much-needed respite and time to work.

The average cost is about \$62 a day, according to the study, usually paid by public programs, including Medicaid, the Veterans Administration or state and local social services.

Centers don't cover their costs with those payments and stay afloat through private fundraising, said Erica Drewry, executive director of Heritage Day's six centers, which serve about 550 people a week - the most of any organization of its kind in Ohio.

Barbara Dishman, who lives with two of her daughters and a son-in-law in Canal Winchester, said she's grateful for Heritage Day, where she spends weekdays while they work.

Dishman, who is 67 and has diabetes, is in a wheelchair. She also can get around with a walker, but not well enough to cook or care for herself during the day.

"It would be very difficult," Dishman said. "They worry about me falling and not being able to reach a phone to call for help."

But on a recent day at the center, she was more interested in talking about her new pastimes than her health. Dishman paints ceramic animals, makes creatures out of beads and painted a picture of a yellow and orange parrot that, for a while, hung at the

Ohio Statehouse.

"It looks real!" she said, surprised at the talents she has recently discovered.

Erma Nowlin, who has been going to Heritage Day for eight years, said she rediscovered herself there, after a trying time in her life when she lost many of her family members.



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Playing a game of balloon volleyball at Heritage Day Health Center are, from left, McKinley Simmons, Ernest Walton and Arnie Copeland.

"It helped me put myself back where I used to be," said Nowlin, who is 63, has diabetes and has suffered two strokes. Her son, who works during the day, lives with her in Blacklick.

"It helped me to find out who Erma is and to find out what Erma can do and what she can do to help others as well," said Nowlin, who also enjoys painting and ceramics.

From the caregivers' perspective, adult day-care provides peace of mind and a respite from the demands of caring for a parent or spouse.

Pat Cleary, who lives in Clintonville with her husband, Dick, 83, said their son first suggested day care for his father, who has dementia.

"I at first kind of drug my feet. My son took me over to see what I thought, and I have to say I was taken aback with what these amazing people do," Mrs. Cleary said of her first visit to the Heritage Day center

on Olentangy River Road.

Now, Dick Cleary goes twice a week. Mrs. Cleary, who is 82, takes walks and goes shopping while he is there.

"I said to him, 'Isn't this great? I don't have to drag you into a store!'"

Wanda Wilson's mother, Luvenia, has been going to the Livingston Avenue center for about six months. The North Side woman said she doesn't know what she'd do without the help and that her mother, who is 89 and has dementia, is happy when she comes home and is more talkative and alert.

"It has really given me peace of mind, knowing that she's cared for and that nothing will happen to her," Wilson said.

Dabelko-Schoeny said there is a lot of variability from center to center and that prospective clients' families can look at standards from the National Adult Day Services Association for guidance on staffing levels and other measures of quality.

In Ohio, centers are reviewed annually, and family members can ask to see those reviews, she said.

Caregivers or other family members looking for help or for more information on adult day programs can go to the Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging's website at <http://www.coaaa.org/> or the National Adult Day Services Association's website at <http://www.nadsa.org/>.

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