

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: Gertrude Oliver



Gertrude Oliver has been living at Extended Care since December.

Lifelong Newark resident Gertrude Oliver has been staying at New Community Extended Care Facility since December. The active member of the nursing home hopes to return to her apartment with the help of family and staff.

Oliver worked as a licensed hairdresser in Newark on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and was an assistant at a day care center in the city where she watched children and made sure they had what they needed throughout the day, including coats during outside playtime.

Late last year, Oliver got very sick and her children brought her to Newark Beth Israel Medical Center. She was referred to Extended Care and moved into the facility at 266 South Orange Ave., Newark, in December 2017.

When she came to the facility, Oliver was very dependent on staff members. But over time, she has gotten stronger and even assists other patients now. Licensed Practical Nurse Maria Cruz calls Oliver one of

her success stories.

“When everybody was giving up, I didn’t,” Cruz said. “When she came, we did everything for her. Now she does everything herself, with supervision.”

Oliver said she likes to keep busy and help others. If a neighbor needs help opening an item, she’s there to assist. She’s often out of her room as well, walking the halls or participating in group meetings where residents discuss current events, do arts and crafts, exercise and drink coffee and juice together.

She has a list of exercises to keep her strength up, which she does daily. She sometimes participates in physical therapy and lifting weights as well.

Oliver still likes doing hair and enjoys dancing. She studied jazz, tap and ballet and danced at Newark Symphony Hall for special occasions in her younger years.

Now at 66, Oliver may not be as fast as she once was, but she still keeps active and is happy to report she hasn’t fallen since coming to Extended Care.

“I like to have fun. I like moving around,” she said. “I like keeping busy.”

Oliver has a son who lives in Kearny and a daughter who lives in Newark. She also has two grandchildren.

While she doesn’t mind accepting help, Oliver said, “I don’t want to be dependent on my son and daughter.”

She also doesn’t want to be depended on Extended Care. She’s thankful to be at the facility, but she is working toward getting released and returning to her apartment on Dayton Street.

Cruz said Extended Care staff members are working with Oliver with that goal in mind.

“Her plan is to go home. We’re helping to make sure she gets home safely,” Cruz said.