

# A new voice for home healthcare

Taryn Birkmire of West Islip named president of LI chapter of state association

By LIZ FINNEGAN



West Islip resident Taryn Birkmire was tapped to be president of the Long Island Chapter of the New York State Association of Health Care Providers.

**WEST ISLIP** — Through the past 25 years while working in home healthcare, Taryn Birkmire has helped many residents on Long Island remain independent even under the most difficult of circumstances.

This West Islip resident was recently given the opportunity to achieve even more in her field by being named president of the Long Island Chapter of the New York State Association of Health Care Providers (HCP).

In her new position, Birkmire, the executive director of Recco Home Care Services, Inc. in Massapequa, will preside over monthly meetings for the 45 member agencies in her chapter, and she will work on committees that address issues, which are relevant to home health care.

Birkmire has been described as, "a true professional with a thorough knowledge and understanding of the industry," by Phyllis Wang, president of New York State's HCP.

"Her commitment to home care and the Long Island Chapter is evident through her unfailing enthusiasm and involvement throughout the years," Wang added.

Home care, though, was not the field Birkmire anticipated working in while she was a business student at Bryant College in Rhode Island. However, upon graduation she accepted a job with an uncle who owned a home care agency.

"He snatched me up," she said with a chuckle. "I was with him for eight years until he closed." She joined Recco Home Care soon after.

Birkmire's appreciation for home care services has grown over the years, just as rapidly as the need for those types of services has increased, especially as the cost of in-hospital medical insurance escalates. "Hospitals are forced to discharge patients a lot earlier than

usual," she said.

She added that an aging population on Long Island has also increased the need for home care. "People want to stay in their homes as long as possible," Birkmire said. "Home care is the most cost effective solution to [meet their needs]."

Since being appointed last month, Birkmire has already traveled to Albany to discuss health care matters with state law makers, and has attended Nassau County Legislature sessions, lobbying for solutions to the challenges in the field today.

One of the greatest challenges most health care agencies face is the growing shortage of home care aides. "We can't keep up with the demands," she said. "Patients are going without services. Our aides are now going from home to home."

Her plans are to focus on recruitment. Currently, her agency employs several hundred home care aides to visit patients from Westchester County to eastern Long Island. She hopes to increase that number in time.

Recco Home Care aides are given more than two weeks training and supervision before being assigned cases. "They receive decent salaries," Birkmire noted.

Aside from having proof of citizenship or the appropriate immigration papers, the only criteria a home health aide candidate needs is compassion. "Our aides are very dedicated," Birkmire said.

Her own dedication to the field will guide her while in office. However, Birkmire must balance her time at work and in office with a family, which consists of three sons and her husband Kenny, captain of the Taryn-Ann charter fishing vessel out of Captree Island.

Still, she's definitely up to the task. "It's very rewarding for me to know that I can make a difference in [patients] lives, and that I can be a part in helping them to keep their independence," Birkmire said. "That's something I truly believe in." ■

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—Taryn Birkmire