



Oretha (L.) says Carol brings happiness to her home.

Shared Living helped Carol find a home and a community

If you'd met Carol Gustafson three years ago, you might not recognize her today. That Carol weighed more than 400lbs., took more than 20 medications daily, had no permanent address and was in an out of homeless shelters. Today, Carol is delighted by how far she's come and pleased to be coming up on her 3rd Anniversary living with Oretha Tequah, her Shared Living provider.

With Oretha's encouragement, Carol began eating the right kinds of food and controlling portion size. She joined Oretha's church and became active in church activities, enjoying Friday evening services and a host of special activities. She got to know Oretha's family and even joined a Liberian social organization that does good works in the community. She's begun to volunteer with the group at a local Veteran's Home and will soon be one of the chefs charged with preparing meals for the home's residents.

Her changed eating habits combined with increased exercise and activity level have altered more than Carol's appearance. Yes, she's significantly thinner, but more than that she's significantly happier. She's been able to cut the number of daily medications down from twenty to seven. Remarkable.

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All of these changes also helped Carol develop confidence – so much so that two months ago she took a huge and exciting step, beginning work in the kitchen of an assisted living facility.

It's hard to reconcile the Carol who looks great, is healthier, proudly working and volunteering, and decorating her home with handmade crafts with the Carol you might have met in a shelter three years ago. It's easy to see why Carol is happy to tell you that she "loves" living with Oretha. But what has the experience been like for Oretha?

Oretha will tell you that Carol brings happiness into her home. Oretha will express the pride she feels for the impact she's made in Carol's life – that living with Carol "makes life worthwhile."

Shared Living for Carol and Oretha is just that – shared interests, shared accomplishments and shared joy.