

## ***Friendly Visitor Program***

- Twenty-six Friendly Visitor volunteers gave a total of 982 hours in 2011

## ***Center Visits***

- A total of 36,566 visits were made to Berks Encore, including each of the six centers' identified and unidentified visits
- (Each visit recorded constitutes [1] person visiting the center on a given day in the month regardless of how many times he/she may have come that day)



Sheila Scott (left)  
and Mim Bucher  
Friendly Visitor participants

# Engage Friendly Visitor

Sheila Scott, age 74, lost her vision at age 16 due to Retinitis Pigmentosa. Even so, she raised a family, worked at Palmer Candy Company for 30 years and continues to live independently in her West Reading home. She is active in her church and the Association for the Blind, and she also attends monthly meetings at the West Side Senior Citizens Club as well as weekly Healthy Steps in Motion exercise classes sponsored by Berks Encore.

Sheila's son helps with her lawn mowing and home maintenance, and all her bills are paid through automatic deductions. Still, she wished for someone to come visit with her, read the mail to her and help her maintain her independence.

That's where Miriam "Mim" Bucher comes in. Two years ago, Mim offered her services to visit with a lonely senior through Berks Encore's Friendly Visitor Program. An outgoing and friendly person, Mim has a significant hearing loss and uses a caption telephone.

During the initial interview, she mentioned that she had previously been reading to a blind friend and that she enjoys helping people.

Since her first visit with Sheila, a close friendship has developed. During weekly visits, they tackle the mail, engage in political discussions, sample Mim's latest recipes and share family highlights. Both women have three grown children and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. "We never run out of things to talk about," reports Mim.

Recently, the two pooled their abilities to call customer service to complain about an unauthorized fee on Sheila's bank account. It took some creativity and persistence – with Sheila speaking to the representative and Mim reading the account numbers – but the issue was resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Both women express gratitude for the Friendly Visitor Program that brought them together. "Mim is great!" says Sheila. For her part, Mim encourages more people to get involved. "When you volunteer to help someone, you find that you receive more than you give."



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