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MEDIA ADVISORY

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**Detroit Area Agency on Aging's Nursing Facility Transition Services brings
dignity, independence and bliss to the lives of older adults in Detroit**
Powerful testimony from the late Maria Elena Melendez reaches DAAA after her death

Detroit, Michigan—In the last year nearly one hundred seniors and persons with disabilities have received life-changing services from the Detroit Area Agency on Aging's (DAAA) Nursing Facility Transition Services (NFTS), and Maria Elena Melendez was one of them. Ms. Melendez wrote a letter expressing how the NFTS services enhanced the quality of her life, but it was mailed to the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) by her sister Gloria Melendez after she died.

“My sister Maria showed how grateful she was to DAAA through the letter I found and mailed. I thought it was important for you to know in her own words how she appreciated the agency's staff for enabling her to move into a quality Detroit apartment complex before she died. On behalf of my family I would like to thank you for making her final days very happy ones. We are so thankful for your service,” said Gloria Melendez.

NFTS is a program of the Michigan Department of Community Health administered by the DAAA. The overall goal of the program is to give seniors and disabled adults the opportunity and choice to consider community-based living as a viable alternative to nursing facility residency. The person must have the desire to live independently, and based on eligibility will possibly receive care services and support once transitioned. NFTS assists people with returning to their own homes; moving in with family members, or friends; or finding other independent living arrangements, such as a new apartment. We will also assist and refer to other support services in their community.

“Our Nursing Facility Transition Program moved 41 persons to MI Choice and 45 persons to other home and community-based services for a total of 86 persons who returned to being independent. This represents a 77% increase over last year's who are back to living in their own home, said Paul Bridgewater, President & CEO of the Detroit Area Agency on Aging. “We serve thousands of seniors and adults with disabilities every year through this program and others, and we value every one of them,” adds Mr. Bridgewater.

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Following is the letter written by Maria Elena Melendez, a recipient of the NFTS program's services:

"I am writing to say "thank you" for making a four-year dream come true. That is how long I have wanted to get an apartment of my own and your organization did it for me.

My place is small but comfortable for one person. It is easy to live in and secure and beautiful. Following Oprah Winfrey's advice, I sat down one day and itemized what my dream flat should consist of--and I got it!!! I have a great view of a gazebo and garden in the back of "Heritage Place"--my location.

I look forward to the Spring so that I can help grow our small garden patches. There are cozy little bench placements outside for those of us to walk around or just sit and relax and enjoy the winds.

You would not believe how wonderful the residents and management people are. We take care of each other and co-mingle with various groups such as sewing groups, bible study, movie viewing and the ever-present card games. I am limited because I only play poker and black-jack. They play Euchre, Whisk and other game boards.

I appreciate that I was given all new appliances and furniture. I needed them (though Favia didn't believe I needed them.)

I cook for myself, wash my dishes and have a chore person to help do the heavy chores. The doctors say I can't lift more than my new vacuum cleaner which is a heavy behemoth in cranberry color.

I live one mile from the Detroit Medical Center so I am able to take cabs to my various appointments easily.

I am cozy. Imagine that?!!! Through my bible study classes on Tuesday nights I have met five good friends and there is nothing better than practicing and reading the Bible with like-minded individuals.

So thank you Mr. Reinhart [of MDCH] from the bottom of my heart. I hope your health improves and that I may some day thank you in person." -- Maria Elena Melendez

For further information call the Detroit Area Agency on Aging's Nursing Facility Transition Services at (313) 446-4444.

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