

## **"The Promise of Technology: One Family's Experience"**

Rick B. lives three hours away from his grandmother, but he sees her every day. With the help of a panoramic video camera mounted in his grandmother's family room, Rick can check on her whenever he chooses just by logging onto a secure website. Thanks to sensors placed strategically throughout his grandmother's home, Rick knows if she's been visited by her beloved grandchildren. Rick's mother and sister, who live in the same town as his grandmother, check on her several times a day as well - from their offices or homes. "This technology has provided us incredible peace of mind," says Rick.

Life used to be much more stressful for Rick and his family. His 94-year-old grandmother, "Grandma Oak," is a fiercely independent woman who lives alone. Nearly a year ago, Grandma Oak suddenly required hospitalization for multiple life threatening health conditions, including congestive heart failure and kidney failure. Rick's family rallied and began providing 24/7 care with the help of hospice. After several weeks, Grandma Oak's symptoms diminished and hospice was no longer necessary. She still needed someone to watch over her daily, however, and the family couldn't do it alone. Since Grandma Oak made it clear that she would not leave her home and she didn't want strangers around all the time, they had to get creative. A bit of research on the Web led to the perfect solution.

Rick's family installed a home monitoring system for Grandma Oak. The technology allows family members to monitor her in real time from any computer. If Grandma Oak deviates from her routine, the family members are alerted via a text message. "The system allows us to be very aware of what her needs are at all times," says Rick. "My mom can check on my grandmother several times a day without having to take time off of work. And I still feel as if I'm a part of the caregiving team even though I'm three hours away." While his mother and sister still visit his grandmother regularly and Rick often visits on weekends, not having to coordinate family members to provide 24-hour coverage has made all the difference.

A pleasant surprise that has come from using the technology is the amount of money it has saved Rick's family. "Instead of paying thousands of dollars per month for around-the-clock home health aides, we have someone go to her home only two to three days per week for just a few hours. Since the monitoring system costs less than \$75 per month, it's a significant savings."

Finally, allowing aging services technology into their lives has provided a tremendous sense of relief for everyone. "We felt enormous guilt that we just couldn't do all of it by

ourselves," says Rick. "We've been relieved of that guilt and we all still feel connected to my grandmother in a wonderful way."

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