

## **INDEPENDENCE/QUALITY OF LIFE...PRICELESS**

Edward Osteen is in his early forties and is a resident of Cross City, Florida. Mr. Osteen was tragically injured in an automobile accident. Over time, his wife abandoned him through divorce and only his 77 year old mother would drive over 10 miles a day to help him get out of bed and place him in a wheel chair for the entire day and then would return in the evening to help him back into bed. The newly formed Multi-Program Local Advocacy Council for Service Area 4 ("MP-LAC") had discovered that Mr. Osteen lacked a quality of life. His home was dilapidated, he had no medication, and Vocational Rehabilitation in Lake City, Florida had failed to even conduct a home visit. Further investigation by the Local Advocacy Council revealed that Mr. Osteen used to have a home health agency but that he was abandoned by them, that he had not seen a physician and that he was out of medication. SAC member Reverend Louis Berry, representing Service Area 4, immediately directed and supervised the MP-LAC into advocating for the protection of Mr. Osteen by Vocational Rehabilitation Division of the Florida Department of Education as Mr. Osteen's home healthcare had been discontinued improperly. Due to some reluctance on part of Vocational Rehabilitation to recognize the authority of the SAC/LAC system, Attorney Andrea Costella of the Southern Legal Services Law Center was retained by the MP-LAC because the Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities, Inc. stated that they were too busy to become involved in Mr. Osteen's case.

Instead of pursuing legal action, the MP-LAC requested that legal counsel merely advised Vocational Rehabilitation of the legal rights available to Mr. Osteen; however, the MP-LAC also contacted AHCA and sought assistance of the Medicaid Program and Home Care Unit. Both Medicaid and the Home Care Unit immediately assisted Mr. Osteen by applying him under the Spine and Brain Injury Waiver. Today, through the efforts of SAC/LAC advocacy, Mr. Osteen receives home healthcare seven days per week and receives proper medications. Additionally, not only was a quality of life given back to Mr. Osteen, but his aged mother no longer needs to drive long distances to help her son, but simply can visit her son and enjoy a clean environment.

