

# Increasing the options

A health care aide gives the homebound a choice



Maria Carpio is a home health care aide for Home Care Options in Paterson. She spends her day visiting patients and caring for their health needs.

By **DIANE HAINES**  
Staff Writer

“It’s My Job” is a weekly question & answer series that talks to people about the work they do – the good aspects, the difficult ones, the things that make it unique. If you’d like to tell us about your job, please call Diane Haines at 973-569-7046 or e-mail her at [haines@northjersey.com](mailto:haines@northjersey.com).

**Name:** Maria Carpio

**Age:** 47

**Where do you live?** Paterson

**Where do you work?** Home Care Options in Paterson. The agency provides health care and social services, including nursing, social work and housekeeping for elderly, ill and disabled patients in their homes

**Job title:** home health aide

**What do you do?**

It depends. One woman, I give her a bath in bed and breakfast. I do shopping and help with medication. I have four patients a day. I wash the patients’ hair, and I clean the house. For another patient, I do laundry and I do shopping.

**How long have you been doing this?**

Twenty years. I like my job. The first couple of months were hard because it was hard to get used to being around sick people. After high school, my mother wanted me to be a nurse but I said no. This is similar and takes less education. I was looking for a job and a friend told me about this. I had a couple of weeks training. It’s been so long I forget how long I trained.

**Describe a typical day.**

Every day is different. Sometimes I start at 6 a.m. I spend two hours with each patient. The patients are in Paterson, Passaic, Clifton and Elmwood Park. I finish at 4 p.m.

**What’s the best thing about your job?**

The best thing is learning how to deal with the patients. The people are interesting. I try to help put a smile on their faces. If I can do that, it makes my day.

**What’s the most difficult thing?**

In the 20 years, I never had a patient die with me until two months ago. She was going down and she closed her eyes and I thought she was asleep but she had died. It was very hard. Her husband was there. It happened one time I left and, an hour later, the daughter called and said her father had died. That’s hard.

**What aspect of your job would surprise people?**

I don’t know how to answer. Maybe it’s what we can’t do. We’re not allowed to iron or scrub floors. We also can’t take anyone in a car.

**What did you want to be when**

Please see **JOB, C8**



Carpio demonstrates how a bed is properly made. She has been working a job for 20 years.

# Job

**Continued from C6  
you were 5 years old?**

To be honest, I wanted to be a secretary like my aunt when I was growing up in Puerto Rico. She was high up and had a high-paying position. I wanted to be just like her. At 18, I went into the National Guard in Puerto Rico for two years and met my husband, who was in the Army. We were married in South Carolina in 1981 and traveled for four years before settling in Paterson.

**What kind of work did your parents do?**

My mother was a nurse in Puerto Rico and my father was in the plumbing business.

**What's your great ambition**

**in life?**

For myself, I would just like to see my three kids grow up and my three grandchildren grow up and stay safe. They all live in Paterson.

**What's your most unforgettable experience on the job?**

I think, every day, what I do, I really enjoy what I do. My patients trust me and they sometimes don't trust their family, but they trust me. I feel close to them, like family. I'm doing my job and, at the same time, I feel like they are my family. They are happy; I can tell. They say, "I don't know what I would do if you weren't here." That makes my day.

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