



Sherry M. Parrish is an extraordinary geriatric social worker and administrator. She has shown her talent, skill, vision and leadership in hospitals, nursing homes, social work education and field instruction, and at a continuing care retirement community (CCRC). Her pioneering spirit, vision, and exuberance have not only been demonstrated in her clinical and administrative responsibilities but also demonstrated by her television roles and programming around retirement adjustment issues on the Retirement Living Television Network. She has hosted 12 episodes of “*What’s Next?*”, a nationally syndicated program that received a regional Emmy Award in 2008. She is an aging expert who has been an innovative, articulate, and passionate social work clinician and administrator using strength-based and persons-centered approaches, long before these concepts became national long-term care and government benchmarks and standards. Ms. Parrish is both a local and regional leader in all aspects of long term care and a national media leader in retirement adjustment and health issues, especially for the baby boomer generation.

Throughout her career of more than 44 years, Ms. Parrish has worked to improve geriatric social work and interdisciplinary care. Since 1996, she has been Director of Resident Life at Erickson Retirement Communities- Charlestown Retirement Community in Catonsville, MD, which serves 2300 residents. She is responsible for daily operations of the Resident Life Division and the administrator for Home Care. She develops programs that directly impact the social, psychological, intellectual, physical and spiritual welfare of residents, managing over 150 staff members across ten departments, including five MSW social workers. Social work has become a respected, integral and essential component of Charlestown interdisciplinary processes as a result of her leadership and respect throughout the organization. She has developed an effective, efficient and clinically sound person-centered social work process that includes preadmission assessment of 100% of admissions, monitoring assimilation and adjustment for new residents, facilitating social connections, assessing risk, providing high risk support and transition and end of life support. Under her direction, the Charlestown Home Health Department has been selected as one of the “Home Care Elite” and was named one of “Top 100” home care agencies. She is always an innovator as exemplified by recently implemented memory fitness programs for all Charlestown residents after being trained by the UCLA Memory Fitness Institute.

Since 1994, Ms. Parrish has been a field instructor at the University of Maryland, School of Social Work. She was appointed as an Adjunct Faculty from 1997-2000 because of her outstanding teaching and conceptual skills as a field instructor. To enhance each student’s field instruction experience, she created a Social Work Internship Training Manual for Charlestown, which has subsequently become the corporate field education model for the sixteen Erickson Living Communities in ten states. This state of the art field instruction manual goes well beyond an orientation. It highlights important clinical tasks, collects student notes and recordings and feedback from supervisors for the students to have record of their field experience and learning needs. It focuses on important aging areas including professional/clinical issues (i.e. normal aging, dementia vs. depression, end of life, teamwork, etc.). A measure of her success as a field instructor has been that many of her field students have chosen to work in the aging field including some now working at Charlestown at a time when it is hard for social work schools to attract students to the field of aging.

She has explored new social work territories, reached millions of viewers and provided concrete tools for elders through her work on Retirement Living Television (RLTV). Her extensive healthcare, long term care and aging experience have prepared her for media work. As the host of the show, “*What’s Next?*”, the show uses teams of experts (specializing in health and wellness, lifestyle and relationships, and volunteer and career opportunities) traveling the country by recreational vehicles guiding and encouraging the show’s guests to make the most of their retirement years and addressing fears and challenges about the transition from work to retirement. The show is described as a “lifestyle makeover television show that turns middle age into an amazing age.” The program has reached over fifteen million viewers to date and is very timely with the huge number of baby boomers reaching retirement age. She has not only received an Emmy award for the program, but was also nominated as best Host of the Year at the 2008 Cable Fax Awards. Her geriatric expertise has resulted in multiple national television appearances including the Today Show, Good Morning America and multiple national television appearances on the RLTV Network including *Health Living*, *Healthline*, *Taking Care with Joan Lunden*, and the *Daily Apple*.

Ms. Parrish began her professional career in 1976 as nursing home director of social work in Richmond, Virginia, where she developed the first multidisciplinary patient care conference model for care providers, created the Student Internship Program and wrote the Social Work policies and procedures for the national company. In 1978 she worked at LeBonheur Children’s Medical Center in Memphis, Tennessee as a pediatric social worker where she was recognized for developing the “Family Viewing Room” for families of deceased children. She later moved to Baltimore, Maryland, and worked in medical social work at Bon Secours Hospital, a large urban hospital in a poorer area. Her expertise and leadership resulted in multiple promotions from social work supervisor to Acting Director of Social Work from 1979-1983 where she represented the hospital on a local/state/national task force addressing the needs of low income, intercity residents. She served as Director of Social Work at Wyman Park Health System, which is part of Johns Hopkins Medical Services Corporation, from 1983-1994. Again her clinical, administrative and supervisory skills resulted in multiple promotions with her last position as the Director of Clinical Operations. In this position, she was responsible for eleven sites with 600 employees. She distinguished herself as a leader in hospital social work and in leadership positions for the Society for Social Work Directors and the National Association of Social Workers where she served on multiple committees. She has been nominated as the Maryland Chapter’s Social Worker of the Year award twice.