

Senator experiences care worker's job

Story and photos by Jack Ruskin

Direct care worker Mozella Langston had state Senator Jay Costa, Jr. looking over her shoulder as she provided personal care to senior patient Mary Vidmar last Thursday afternoon.

Costa was participating in a Come Care With Me Day event sponsored by PHI (Paraprofessionals Health Institute).

Long-term care has been in the news lately and Pennsylvania is facing a growing shortage of direct care workers for senior patients diagnosed with several conditions including Diabetes and Coronary Artery Disease.

PHI invites legislators and officials from across the state to highlight the health care gap and the working conditions of such workers through its Healthcare for Health Care Workers Initiative.

Senator Costa was welcomed to his day of duties by Tracy Law-



Mozella and Senator Costa talking about some of the chores they will perform.



Jay Costa preparing a sandwich.

less, a Campaign Coordinator from HEALTHCARE for HealthCare Workers, an initiative of PHI, who said her organization, was planning to have 20 similar government official events across the state to emphasize the economic plight of the care workers.

Tracy explained that the "care gap" between workers who are in the 25 to 44 age range and the client/patient who is 65 and older is expanding.

"It is projected that that gap will increase more than 50 percent in the next decade, so we need legislators to take a serious look at this situation," she explained. She added that available case workers are on the decline and an important

factor is to make sure they have access to affordable health coverage.

Costa devoted a bit of his time learning about the duties of the care personnel and clients to have a better understanding of the economic needs.

Senator Costa was also informed that the PHI program is designed to help with the economic recovery and has 157,000 direct-care workers who are "shovel-ready."

After the socializing, Senator Costa put on a pair of plastic gloves and prepared a sandwich with assistance from Mozella.

"It is enjoyable to get out into the public and interact with the people to understand their needs," Costa remarked.