



says as she reflects upon her father, Roy's, final years of life. The former engineer, once so energetic and full of life, had been otherwise extremely healthy before Alzheimer's took his life two years ago.

Had there been a Y-OPAS program in Texas, it certainly would have eased many of the hardships Baginzki's mother faced trying to take care of her husband. That's because Y-OPAS organizes a bank of community volunteers to drive seniors to their doctor's appointments, the grocery store and any other errand they might not be able to run by themselves. Volunteers also assist seniors with things like taking their medications and preparing meals. In fact, there's not much Y-OPAS volunteers don't do.

Surprisingly, the Ahwatukee Y's Y-OPAS program is the only one of its kind in the nation. Its 159 volunteers serve roughly 900 seniors in the Foothills and Ahwatukee areas. "It's really hard for seniors to ask for favors from family and friends again and again and again — and keep in mind that not all of them have family living in town who can help them," Baginski says. "They want to live their lives with dignity, in their own homes, and they want to be as independent as they can, but sometimes

they need a little help and it's my pleasure to be able to provide that help," she says.

Thanks to Baginski, representatives from the Ahwatukee Foothills Chapter of 100+ Women Who Care recently presented Ahwatukee Foothills YMCA Executive Director Sandra Franks with a check for \$10,150 to help support the Y-OPAS program. The Y has been running Y-OPAS with great success since taking over the program from Mountain View Church in 2006.

"This is so exciting because this donation is coming from a charity based in the Foothills and it's serving a charity based in the Foothills," an elated Franks said after receiving the check. "It costs us about \$85,000 a year to run the Y-OPAS program, so this donation will make a huge impact," she says.

Baginski says securing the 100+ Women Who Care donation was a huge thrill, but more than anything, she hopes word about the Y-OPAS program will prompt more people to volunteer. "Being a volunteer with Y-OPAS has been extremely rewarding for me," she says. "Whenever I volunteer, I feel that I'm the one who really benefits. It is such a privilege to be a part of this program and I hope more people will consider being a part of it, too!"

# COMMUNITY: IMPACT I

## Tracy Baginski

Foothills Resident Scores Big Donation for YMCA's Y-OPAS Program

By Stephanie Hayden | Sponsored By Parker & Sons

Foothills resident Tracy Baginski had a good feeling the night she presented a pitch about her favorite local charity — the Ahwatukee Foothills YMCA's "Y-OPAS" program — to a group of donors from the Ahwatukee Foothills Chapter of 100+ Women Who Care. The group was preparing to give \$10,000 dollars to a worthy cause — and with representatives from two other local charities also competing for the money, Baginski knew her speech had to reach the audience on a personal level if she was going to get the money for the Y's Outreach Program for Ahwatukee Seniors.

"I just spoke from my heart about how I wished there had been a Y-OPAS program in Texas to help my dad when he was struggling with Alzheimer's disease," a passionate Baginski



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