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The Webster Dictionary defines "Angel" as "*a typically benevolent celestial being that acts as an intermediary between heaven and earth.*" Dale Alexander O'Dell, is a living Angel, one who illustrates for all of us the true meaning of caring for those with significant hardships. Lessons learned from Dale can help all of us appreciate our lives and our families so much more.

An elderly man was leaving Staples last week accompanied by a woman. What was so unusual about this image was the way the man was walking. The man's arm had a comfortable grip on the left wrist of the seemingly strong woman as he struggled to move one foot in front of the other. Slowly but surely the man attempted to make his way through the busy parking lot towards their car. I thought this process was going to take close to 25 minutes, yet he only needed to travel about 50 feet. And, why was the woman holding up the man WHILE keeping the gentleman's cane gripped tightly in HER right hand? Shouldn't he be holding the cane? After all, he looked as though he had been the victim of a stroke, not her! As they passed slowly by me, I understood the reasoning behind their carefully planned choreographed movement. "Sir, how many steps have we taken since we left the store? Remember, we set a goal today of 35 steps. We've only got 7 steps to go before you get your cane back. Great job! Yesterday you walked less than 15 steps without the cane. I am so proud of you. Everyday is a day full of wonder and promise. Soon you won't need the cane at all."

How ashamed I was of myself at that moment. As a physician, I would have simply placed this stroke victim in a wheel chair and pushed him from the car, to the store, through the shopping area, and back to the car again. I never would have taken the time to teach this unfortunate man to walk. When he reached the car, he had both a smile on his face and a tear in his eye. His accomplishments were incredible and the joy of success were shared by his teammate, Dale, who knew that tomorrow he would easily be able to walk 60 steps.

Dale is the President of Angels Caring for Angels. Her job is to place caregivers in homes of patients with significant disabilities. She learned this "gig" first hand, caring for her mother who suffered with diabetes related complications. Not wanting to place her Mother in the care of anyone else, Dale decided to devote her life to taking care of her. The lessons they taught one another help Dale open her successful Angels agency.

I asked Dale, "Why are you doing this kind of work when you obviously have so much talent?" Dale looks at her job as if it were a 401-K plan. "If I provide care for those less fortunate than myself now, I know that I will someday be rewarded by God for doing so. I will just cash my chips in later."

The patients for which Dale cares are time consuming, physically and emotionally challenging. Few of us in society have the guts, the gall, or the energy to love this type of work. Not only does Dale live for her patients, her patients live, grow and improve for her. Each of these patients is touched by an Angel every time Dale is called to help them deal with their God given illnesses.

I wish Dale and her agency the best of luck. I am proud of them for what they do. I am moved by their generosity and genuine sense of humanity. I am honored that Dale and her agency are working as members of the health care team. They deserve our recognition, our thoughts, our prayers and our gratitude. I have been touched by these angels!

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