When Josie Dickey suffered a massive stroke in August 2002, few people would have given her more than a year to live. Today her life revolves around her family and around doing as much as she is able, especially when spurred on by her daughter Brenda Terry. “The more she does, the better she is,” Brenda says of her mother, who’s 87 and suffers from serious health problems that leave her too frail to care for herself. “She’s participating in life—and that’s a great big deal.”

It wasn’t always this way. Following a stroke, Josie went to live in a nursing home. But she was neglected there and contracted pneumonia. After six weeks, Brenda brought her home to live with her. Then came a string of home health aides—about 30 in the space of three years. Josie’s care coordinator told Brenda about Arkansas’ Cash & Counseling program, called IndependentChoices. Brenda quit her $13-an-hour job to work as her mother’s caregiver for less than half that pay.

Since then, Josie has been healthier, more active, and more engaged in her life. It used to take three people to lift Josie out of bed but, now, Brenda can manage the task on her own because Josie is much stronger. In the year that she’s been enrolled in IndependentChoices, Josie hasn’t been sick once.