



In Support of Caregivers

A Publication of the Caregivers' Resource Center and Alzheimer's Support Unit at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging

Summer 2008

Vol. 20, Number 2

In this issue:

- ⇒ Home that Cares for Caregiver ⇒ Daily Affirmations
- ⇒ Workshop Opportunities ⇒ Lee Woodruff on Caregiving
- ⇒ Seeking a Second Opinion ⇒ Confusing Regret with Guilt

Powerful Tools for Caregivers:

New classes were well-attended and well-received

For the first time, the six-week series of classes, *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*, were held in Tompkins County this past April and May. Attendance was better than expected. Although two sessions were scheduled, a third class had to be added to accommodate the 38 who registered. 36 caregivers completed the classes. Fortunately, we have seven professionals from various cooperating agencies trained to offer the classes, which are each "team taught" by two of the leaders. By all accounts, those who attended found the classes very helpful.

We have already scheduled the next series of classes which will begin in late September. Join us for this six-week educational program designed to provide you with the tools you need to take care of yourself while caring for another.

You will learn to: reduce stress, improve self-confidence, and increase your ability to make tough decisions, better communicate your feelings, locate helpful resources and balance your life.

Tuesdays, Sept. 23 – Oct. 28
9 AM - 11:30 AM at Kendal of Ithaca

Tuesdays, Sept. 23 – Oct. 28
6 PM - 8:30 PM at Lifelong

Thursdays, Oct. 2 – Nov. 6
2 PM - 4:30 PM at Cayuga Medical Center

POWERFUL
TOOLS
for Caregivers

Register for one or another of the classes by calling the Office for the Aging, 274-5488.

Summer Support Groups

The Caregivers' Resource Center facilitates the following groups. Call 274-5492 for details.



Caring for Aging Parents

- Open to those caring for parents or other elderly relatives or friends.
- Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month: (June 18, July 16, August 20)
7:00 – 8:30 PM at Lifelong, 119 W. Court St.
- Sponsored in cooperation with Lifelong

Alzheimer's & Other Dementia Caregiver Support Group

- Open to those caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or other cognitive impairments
- Meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month: (June 24, July 22, August 26)
- 1:00 - 2:30 PM in the Office for the Aging Conference Room (320 N. Tioga St., Ithaca)

Parkinson's Support Group

- Open to Parkinsonians and their Caregivers.
- Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the Month: (June 18, July 16, August 20)
- 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM at Cooperative Extension, 615 Willow Ave., Ithaca
- Sponsored in cooperation with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County

Evening Alzheimer's Group

In addition to the daytime group (above), people caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's or related disorders can also now attend a group that meets at 5:30 PM on the 1st Wednesday of each month (July 2, August 6, September 3). It meets at Lifelong, 119 W. Court St. and is sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association of CNY. For information, call 330-1647.

Local Caregiver Services

Caregivers' Resource Center & Project CARE Services

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

David Stoyell, Katrina Schickel, and Marilyn Roberts Chase (274-5482)



The Caregivers' Resource Center & Alzheimer's Support Unit offers family caregivers information and consultation services, support groups, workshops, this newsletter, and a lending library of books and videos on caregiving topics. Stop by or call for an appointment.

Volunteers from *Project CARE* give caregivers a needed break and help out in other ways as needed. We may also be able to arrange for paid home care services or short-term respite for stressed caregivers who are having difficulty paying for those services. Call Trina to discuss your needs.



In-Home Counseling & Respite Service

Family and Children's Service

Lisa Kendall (277-8081)



A caregiver counselor will visit family caregivers and help them work through complex caregiving issues or for emotional support. This program also offers grant-funded home health aide respite service to give caregivers a needed break.

Adult Day Program

Longview Adult Day Community

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, 9 am-3 pm
Marilyn Strassberg (375-6320)

Adult day programs offer older adults companionship along with planned social and recreational activities. It often provides a break from caregiving and time for other matters. Includes lunch and snacks. Possible partial scholarship for low-income applicants.

Homes That Care for the Caregiver

By Michelle Putnam, MGS

Typically, home modification is discussed in relation to the person being cared for. Certainly there are many ways to make a home friendlier for the person receiving care. However, you can also reduce some of the caregiving stresses and strains by making the home more helpful for the caregiver. These tips will make your home safer and more efficient for the caregiver:

- Replace standard phones with cordless phones. Carry the phone with you from room to room for easy answering.
- Reduce back strain with rolling carts. Add a wheeled cart to the kitchen, bath, garage, bedroom or wherever you find yourself continually carrying heavy items between rooms, such as laundry, groceries or meals.
- Place casters on dining room chairs. If you're constantly scooting someone closer to the table, casters will reduce your work. They also make it easier for the person to move himself.
- Use an indoor-outdoor room monitor. This radio device (commonly used by mothers with infants) allows you to be in a separate room and still hear what's going on or hear if they call you.
- Make your home easy to enter and exit. Add a ramp or easy-to-reach handrails on both sides of the stairs leading to entrance doors. If your driveway is dirt or gravel, consider paving it for a smoother-walking surface.
- Install lever-style door handles on inside and outside doors. Round doorknobs can be hard to turn if your hands are wet, your arms are full of packages or you have arthritis. Lever handles require less effort to open and open easily with an elbow or wrist. They offer the same amount of security as the traditional

knob and are simple to install. Your local hardware store will have them for \$10 to \$50, depending on brand and type.

- Get a pet. This may seem odd advice, but a cat or dog or other pet will provide your loved one with endless attention and love. A pet is no substitute for human touch, but it will allow you to leave the room to work on other things without leaving the patient alone. A pet also serves as a sort of confidante for the patient.
- Install a hand-held shower, bath seat and grab bars. A hand-held shower helps direct water spray and make the bathing experience less frustrating.
- Reduce clutter. Temporarily put away all dust catchers and high maintenance objects. Although displays are nice, they add to your workload.
- Hire a cleaning service. Although you may have a spare hour to straighten up now and then, hiring a service will ensure that you won't have to worry about finding time to clean. After caring for your loved one all day, you're better off taking a nap or enjoying a hobby than spending your precious free time scrubbing the floor.
- Create a private space. Find an extra room or corner, away from everyone, that you can call your own and fix up to your liking. Everyone needs a private retreat.



Reprinted from the May 2008 issue of Aging Arkansas. Ms. Putnam is a gerontology consultant and environmental design specialist.

Take a Walk with a Workshop

How about combining getting some exercise with receiving insight from others to help with your caregiving role? The *Family Caregiving Alliance* has a new feature on its website, an online audio archive of TeleCaregiving Workshops. These popular workshops offer caregivers the unique opportunity to learn practical care skills from expert instructors in their homes, office, or “on the road.”

These audio files are accessible for instant online play on your computer, or as a file that can be downloaded to your iPod or MP3 player (or your son or daughter’s iPod or MP3 player if you don’t have one yet.) Put on your earphones and you can be on your way to “taking a walk with a workshop.”

Current workshop titles include:

- Caring Together! Sharing Caregiving Responsibilities with Siblings or other Family Members
- Medications: Safe and Less Expensive Drug Therapy—A Caregiver’s Role
- Keeping Away the Caregiver Blues

Workshop titles of interest to dementia caregivers:

- Communicating with Someone with Dementia
- Understanding and Treating Difficult Dementia Behaviors
- Understanding Stroke & Vascular Dementia



You can access the audio workshops in the “TeleCaregiving Workshop Audio Archive” at <http://www.caregiver.org>. While you are at the website of the Family Caregiver Alliance, check out the other resources available there. You will find a wealth of caregiving advice, resource listings, newsletters, fact sheets, research reports and discussion groups.

Caregivers’ Resource Center

Contact the Caregivers’ Resource Center at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging for any of the following supports:



- Telephone support** available Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
- Respite Services:** Volunteer Support for Caregivers through Project CARE, help with paying for short-term respite, referral to other weekly respite services
- Printed Guides** for Caregivers on Resources for Caregivers in Tompkins County*
- This quarterly **newsletter:** *In Support of Caregivers**
- Caregiver **Support groups**
- Periodic **Educational Presentations** for family caregivers including *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* classes.
- Articles/brochures** on a multitude of caregiving topics
- Alzheimer’s/Dementia Caregiving Resources
- Lending library** of books and videotapes on caregiving topics
- Speakers** available to talk to community groups and employee groups on caregiving topics

*These publications are **also available on-line** at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging Web Site: <http://www.tompkins-co.org/COFA> (Click on “Gateway to Senior Services.”) See the last page of this newsletter for information on ways you can contact the Caregivers’ Resource Center.

See page 9 for info on a workshop titled “Alzheimer’s 101” being held July 29.

Time To Quit Driving?

Use this checklist as a guide to answer this question.

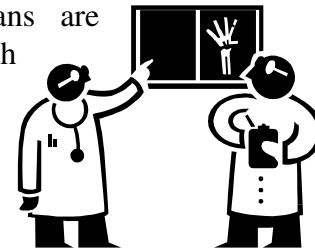
At some point most seniors must stop driving. And the stickiest part about this fact is that they are usually not the ones to make that decision. If you are in a position to counsel a senior who may have become a danger to himself or others behind the wheel, here are some questions from the **AARP** that will help you figure out if it is time for a senior to turn in his keys.

- ◆ Does the person feel uncomfortable and uneasy while driving?
- ◆ Does she find it hard to concentrate on driving or stay in the travel lane?
- ◆ Has he had minor accidents leading to dents and scrapes on the car or on fences, garage doors, etc?
- ◆ Is she unable to observe traffic signals and road signs?
- ◆ Does he get lost in familiar locations?
- ◆ Does she have a slow reaction time?
- ◆ Is he having trouble judging gaps in traffic?
- ◆ Is she getting angry about people honking at her while driving?
- ◆ Do friends and relatives avoid driving with him?
- ◆ Is she having vision problems?
- ◆ Has he had repeated current warnings from traffic enforcement officers?
- ◆ Does she have medical problems, like Alzheimer's Disease, that could affect driving?



Should You Seek a Second Opinion?

Asking for a second opinion is not an insult to doctors and it does not imply that they are incompetent. Physicians are trained to consult with their colleagues and share information, test results, observations, and even hunches.



When to Get a Second Opinion

You should seek a second opinion:

- ✓ When your care recipient's insurance policy requires it.
- ✓ When the physician recommends surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or a series of tests.
- ✓ When the skills and training of a specialist are needed.
- ✓ When you want to be absolutely sure of a diagnosis and/or a particular treatment plan.
- ✓ When you feel it is important to get a fresh perspective or you are not comfortable with the physician's care.
- ✓ When your loved one has experienced a sudden, radical change for the better or worse.

Help with Veteran's Concerns

If the person for whom you are caring is a veteran, or spouse of a veteran, the Veteran's Counseling Center can help with questions regarding benefits and how to apply for them. Call Ed Tenerio at 272-1084. For information on home care and other long term care services that may be provided to a veteran, call Tompkins Care Connection, 274-5222.



Avoiding Caregiver Burnout

People who provide care for older people are frequently under great pressure. They often have to pass on vacations and other things and even having free time can be difficult. As a result of the demands, caregivers can suffer from depression and exhaustion. They may feel resentment about all that is required. A caregiver can come to experience what is called “burnout”.



“Burnout” can be described as being overworked and overwhelmed. There can be a sense of emptiness and sadness. There may also be a tendency to be frustrated and angry. There may even be physical symptoms including headaches, backaches, insomnia, and even heart problems. Caregivers need to learn coping skills and try to avoid burnout.

You may not be able to take a vacation. But try to plan ahead and pick one day a month when you schedule something fun – just for you.

- ◆ Ask friends and neighbors for help with cleaning and yard work.
- ◆ Plan a visit to check out Adult Day Care, respite programs, and support groups.
- ◆ Consider enrolling in the fall series of *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* classes (see page 4).

(Adapted from the Elder Care Handbook by the Broome County Office for the Aging.)

Clip and save!

Daily Affirmations for Caregivers

Following are some of the statements that Bernie Siegel, MD suggests that family caregivers affirm about themselves on a daily basis:

I love myself.

I respect my own needs.

I am able to ask for what I need.

I am open to receiving.

I am kind and gentle with myself.

I know how to nurture myself.

I take time to exercise daily.

I replenish my energy by eating healthy foods.

I have all the energy I need.

I am compassionate with myself and others.

I am able to feel and express all my emotions.

I forgive myself and others.

I take time for fun.

I love and trust in the process of life.

I am at peace with myself.

I trust that I am doing the best that I can.

I am loved.

Financial Help with Respite

To discuss opportunities for respite help to give you a break from caregiving, or financial help for those who can't afford needed respite care, please contact the Caregivers' Resource Center at the Office for the Aging, 274-5491.



New in the Lending Library

A Family Caregiver Speaks Up: It Doesn't Have to Be This Hard, Suzanne Geffen Mintz, 2007.

Self-help ideas and emotional guidance for individual family caregivers with an inspirational call to arms for health policy change.

My Mother, Your Mother: Embracing "Slow Medicine," Dennis McCullough, MD. 2008.

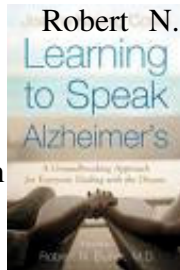
A Geriatrician forewarns readers of particular issues and opportunities along "eight distinct stations along the path of late life" commonly experienced by elders and their families. Advocates for "slow medicine" to best help our elders maintain freedom, comfort and dignity.

Water for Elephants. Sara Gruen. 2006

This NY Times bestseller is not really about family caregiving, but it is a good read. Alternating between the period of the Great Depression and the present day, it is the colorful narrative of a restless 93-year old man who passes time in a nursing home recalling his dangerous and fantastic life as a circus veterinarian.

Learning to Speak Alzheimer's. Robert N. Butler, MD. 2003.

A book that emphasizes relating to patients in their own reality, working to enhance communication between care partners and patients who have dementia. It provides practical application to issues (e.g., adjusting room design for the patient's comfort, helping the patient talk about the illness, dealing with wandering, paranoia, and aggression).

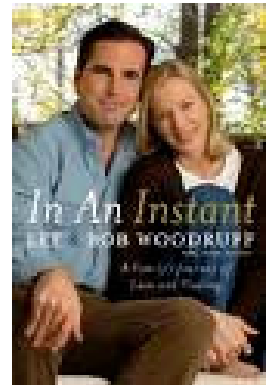


Dancing with Rose, Lauren Kessler. 2007

Kessler, an accomplished journalist, enlists as an aide in an Alzheimer's facility and is surprised by the unexpected humanity that is alive and well there. A new optimistic view on what Alzheimer's has to teach us, and a much-needed tonic for family caregivers.

In Hindsight

When ABC Correspondent, Bob Woodruff, was seriously injured in Iraq, his wife, Lee Woodruff was thrust into a caregiving role. In the March/April 2008 issue of *Caring Today*, Lee shared some of the things she thought she did right as a caregiver, and others she thinks she could have done better:



The three she thinks she did right:

1. She kept swimming laps.
2. She was Bob's advocate every step of the way.
3. She subscribed to the "chit" system.
"In the immediate aftermath of his injury, when people rushed in with offers to help, I told them I'd give them an IOU. Then I called on them later to do something helpful."

The three things she'd have done differently:

1. She would have asked for more help.
2. She would have had a better handle on finances.
3. She would have sought emotional help earlier.

Mobility Demonstration

July 15, 10:00 AM

Finger Lakes Independence Center
215 5th Street, Ithaca

Jeff Klossner, from Maximum Mobility, will demonstrate the newest technology for improving mobility, including a home safety system for transfers, power chair technology, and submersible bathtub seats. Call 272-2433 if you wish to attend.

Avoid Confusing Regret with Guilt

Think how often you have felt guilty about something over which you had no control—or have felt guilty about having to make a tough decision when it was impossible to keep everyone involved happy, including yourself.



I feel guilty that I am not spending enough time with....

I feel guilty that I am healthy when he is ill.

I feel guilty that I am taking away her car keys.

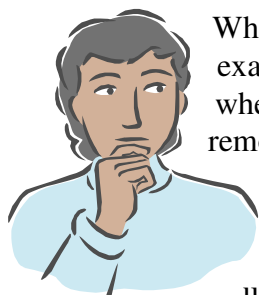
Think about how much easier it is emotionally for someone if they feel “regret” rather than guilt.

I regret that I can't spend more time with ...”

I regret that he has become so ill and can't enjoy his past independence

I regret that I have to take away her car keys.

REGRET may imply **sadness** that circumstances couldn't be otherwise rather than GUILT, which involves **remorse** over having done something wrong. REGRET may be more appropriate than guilt even when, with hindsight, we would have acted differently, if a person can affirm that they did the best that could at the time.

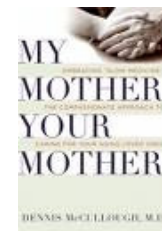


When you are feeling guilty, try to examine your thinking to see whether there is reason for remorse—or rather is it a case where you can affirm that you've done your best and stop blaming yourself unnecessarily for sad happenings that just must be grieved and eventually accepted.

News and Notes

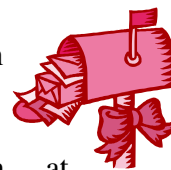
Caregiver Book Club

A book club has been formed by the residents' council at Beechtree Care Center to provide caregivers of loved ones in late life the opportunity to read and discuss books that help them work well with the medical team and sharpen caregiving skills. The “Powerful Caregivers Marching Band Book Club” meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month in the 2nd Floor Conference Room of the Beechtree Care Center from 6:30-7:30 PM. For more info, contact Adrienne McNair, 266-0708.



Small Comforts Gifts

Residents of Tompkins County can download an application for a “comfort gift” to improve the life of a chronically ill person at www.smallcomforts.com. Types of awards in the past have been recliners, air conditioners, bedding, DVD players, air purifiers, etc. For more info., go to the website of the Small Comforts Foundation or call 257-6059.



Digital TV-Order Coupons Soon!

If you or your loved one is still relying on a TV antenna, by now you probably now that you will need a digital converter box. If you plan to apply for the coupons available from the government to offset most of the cost of the converter box, don't cut it too close to the date in early 2009 when analog broadcast signals will stop. Coupons may take several months to arrive. Call 1-800-DTV-2009 or visit www.dtv2009.gov



Tax Stimulus Payment

Even residents in nursing homes who are on Medicaid are eligible for the Tax Stimulus payment. It will not count as income and can be spent however they wish when it is received. Call the Office for the Aging if you need help in learning about the simplified application process for social security beneficiaries. It must be filed by October 15.



Alzheimer's Notes



Live 24-hour emergency response service for wandering and medical emergencies

In a move to significantly improve the safety of individuals with Alzheimer's and related dementia, MedicAlert and the Alzheimer's Association have formed an alliance to offer MedicAlert + Safe Return. It continues to be a 24-hour emergency response service for wandering and medical emergencies.

When a person with dementia wanders or becomes lost, his or her information and phone is provided to local law enforcement. When a person is found, a citizen or law official calls the 800-number on the identification product and the individual's family or caregivers are contacted.

The Alzheimer's Association provides information and support during search and rescue efforts. In addition, should medical attention be required, access to a personal health record is immediately available.

Enrollment information is available on the Alzheimer's Association website at www.alzcnny.org (Type "safe return" in the search box) or call the Alzheimer's Association 24-hour helpline at **800-272-3900**.

Getting a Person with Alzheimer's to Take Medications

- Put the pills in a box that has sections for the day and time.
- Put the pills next to the person's plate at mealtime.
- Ask the pharmacist if it is okay to crush the pills and put them in food.
- If the person has trouble swallowing pills, ask the doctor to prescribe liquid medication or a patch.
- If the person refuses to take the medications wait a few minutes and ask again.
- Couple it with something the person would like to do. (for example: "Let's take your pills now so we can go out for a drive" *(Note: The same strategy might work for bathing.)*)
- Plan treat time and medications time together. ("Let's have our pills and ice cream now.")
- Tell her the doctor wants to know if she has taken the medication today.
- Calmly offer medicine while she is doing something else.

(Adapted from the Caregiver Assistance Newsletter, March 2008)

Alzheimer's 101

Tuesday, July 29 – Noon-1:30 PM
Cooperative Extension, Ithaca

Michael Massurin, Director of Programs and Services for the CNY Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, will give an overview of Alzheimer's and related dementia and current research and treatment. A discussion of issues of concern to participants will follow and a brief overview of local supports available to family caregivers will be included.

The workshop is free. Bring your brown bag lunch if you wish. Beverages provided. To register, call the Office for the Aging, 274-5492, or e-mail: dstoyell@tompkins-co.org.



The Caregivers' Resource Center and Alzheimer's Support Unit

Please call or visit us at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging in the County Courthouse basement, 320 North Tioga St., Ithaca. Open weekdays, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM.

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E-mail: mroberts@tompkins-co.org



Website of Interest to Family Caregivers:

Tompkins County Office for the Aging: www.tompkins-co.org/cofa

(Click on "Gateway to Senior Seniors" at the top of the home page to access our resource guides and back issues of this newsletter.)

Tompkins County Long Term Care Services: www.tompkins-co.org/dss/ltc

Family Caregiver Coalition (California-based): www.caregiver.org

National Alzheimer's Association: www.alz.org

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