

Caregiver Quarterly

A publication of Caregiver Services,
a program of the Area 1 Agency on Aging.

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Caregiver Services

maintains a registry, matching trained and pre-screened caregivers with potential employers, including In-Home Supportive Services clients. Information and support are available for family and professional caregivers.

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A Mile In Your Walker...

By Laura Patterson

I found myself in an interesting puzzle when I sprained my ankle and could not bear any weight on it at all. Losing the ability to run or even walk around like I usually do gave me a whole new appreciation for Caregiver Services' clients whose limited mobility makes doing the chores of daily life difficult to nearly impossible.

Crutches were too clumsy. I kept dropping them, so I borrowed a walker. It could stand alone, and I could lift my body and hop around.

My challenges, and perhaps yours or someone you care for, included but were not limited to these:

How to buy groceries? I could drive to the store and park close by, hop inside using the walker, use a motorized cart to shop and have a bagboy carry filled bags to the car for me. But once I arrived home, how would I manage hopping with my walker or crutches and carrying bags of groceries?

I was faced with the challenge of how to shower safely as well. Since I have a handheld shower, I decided to sit. I did not have a shower chair so I tried to use my metal over-bath tray that usually holds my book or scrubby

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Senior Lunch Social in Willow Creek Thrives!



Deal those cards! Merthell Gleave (right) reaches for a card while Mel Robinson and Jean Vaughn await their turn. In the background are Dick Nute on the left, and Joy Brunner on the right.

February was the kick-off month for the Senior Lunch Social at the Willow Creek Resource Center. Seniors from the community gathered together to play cards and socialize and, of course, have a nourishing lunch.

Volunteers served up minestrone soup and rolls, coffee and tea to 14 seniors who

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Senior Lunch Social *(Continued from page 1)*

attended. The Senior Lunch Social is being held in the Community Room at St. Joseph's Resource Center on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month from 12 noon to 1:30. Seniors interested in playing cards and games are encouraged to come earlier as the Center is open at 11:00.



Enjoying lunch are, from lower left clockwise, Mel Robinson, Don Castner, Dick Nute, Rosalie Watson, Paul Watson, Jean Vaughn and Joy Brunner.

KT-Net offers free rides to the Senior Lunch Social to those who live within five miles of the Center. Call KT-Net at 629-1192 the day before pick-up for your reservation.

For more information on the Senior Lunch, contact Michele Swift, Registry Specialist at Caregiver Services in Willow Creek, (530) 629-1139.

Need a Helping Hand?

By Julie Sessa

Maybe a grab bar or a railing could help you or the person in your care move more securely in the home. Perhaps a shower chair or hand-held shower head would make taking a bath safer.

The Area 1 Agency on Aging has limited funding for such minor home modifications. It is available to caregivers who are not paid for their services, such as family, neighbors or friends, who provide care to someone age 60 or over. The modifications can be in your home, or the home of the person in your care. To find out more, call Senior Information and Assistance at 442-9591.

Julie Sessa is Special Projects Coordinator for Area 1 Agency on Aging's Information Services.

A Mile In Your Walker ... *(Continued from page 1)*

supplies. This did NOT work! The tray bent and I fell down! So I sat on the tub floor, which would be a huge issue for anyone who was not as flexible as I am.

How to care for my pets? I have a large young dog that is used to going for walks to get exercise and take care of his business. We walk rain or shine, but how does one ask a friend to come over when it is pouring rain Humboldt style to walk your dog? How do you buy and carry big bags of dog or cat food? How do you fill or empty a litter box or wipe up muddy paw prints? I decided that doggie day care was in order. I still had to walk him from the front door to the car while hopping on one leg in the rain in my muddy driveway without him seeing and then chasing a neighborhood cat.

After a couple of days of leaning on the walker, I found that my hands had had it! They were sore and tired and bruised from carrying the weight of half my body. Hands are not designed for such stress! They ached, as did the rest of my body from the changes in posture, crawling when I could not hop and my attempts to be as independent as possible.



I am terribly stubborn and found it difficult to ask for help even though I have been a caregiver for many years, helping others and encouraging them to ask me for what they need. Now, I have a much greater understanding and empathy for all of those who find themselves in need of help to perform their basic activities of daily living. I have a greater respect for all caregivers, paid and volunteer, who help with these tasks while maintaining the dignity of those in their care.

Laura Patterson is a Resource Specialist for Caregiver Services.

Caregiver Quarterly is published every three months by Caregiver Services, a program of the Area 1 Agency on Aging. We welcome your comments. Please send letters and change of address notices to *Caregiver Services*, Area 1 Agency on Aging, 3300 Glenwood Street, Eureka CA 95501. You can also e-mail us at: caregiver@a1aa.org

Be An IHSS Caregiver!

By Teresa Christian

I have now been with Caregiver Services for the last 10 months as a Resource Specialist. It is my job to create matches between recipients (the person needing assistance in the home) and caregivers or care providers (the person going into the home to assist with necessary tasks of daily living).

I want to encourage caregivers to consider working for IHSS (In-Home Supportive Services) recipients. IHSS is a County program that helps low income people who are frail, elderly or disabled, by paying for caregivers to help with everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, transportation and personal care.

Your choice to add an IHSS client to your present schedule could make a huge difference for these individuals to be able to remain in their homes with dignity and live independent lives. As a past IHSS recipient, I can deeply appreciate the struggle to find a caregiver. I have personally experienced the frustration of trying to accomplish day to day tasks that are difficult because of a disability. Living in a rural county such as Humboldt also makes it difficult to find a caregiver. It is a sparsely populated region spread out over a large area with towns and cities being many miles apart.

It breaks my heart when I have to send someone a letter saying there is no caregiver currently available for them. I explain to recipients how our registry database is used to match recipients with available caregivers. When I am able to do a successful match, I'm bouncing in my seat saying "Yes! Yes!"

Teresa Christian is a Resource Specialist for Caregiver Services.

NOTE: Caregivers listing with Caregiver Services' free registry may expand their services to include IHSS clients by calling 443-4363 (toll free 877-977-1604).

Make Medicare Drug Plan Choices Early

By Anne Antoville

If you have not yet made a decision regarding Medicare drug plans, you may not want to wait much longer. Although the deadline for enrolling in a Medicare Drug Plan is May 15th, there are a number of the reasons why it may be a good idea to think ahead.

Medicare is recommending that beneficiaries who want to use a Medicare drug plan enroll in the early part of the month for drug coverage the following month. To get coverage by May, you may want to enroll early in April. Based on what HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program) has experienced so far, it may take six weeks to receive a plan card and verify your enrollment. It may be difficult to access drug plans by phone in April. If you think you need in-person assistance, you may want to sign up for a HICAP appointment early, as our appointments may fill quickly for April.

If You Currently Have Other Prescription Coverage:

If you are a veteran and receive prescriptions through the Veterans Administration, you do not need to enroll in a Medicare drug plan unless you are unable to get medications through the VA. VA benefits are creditable for Medicare Drug Plans, so you will not have to pay penalties if you wait to enroll.

If you have other drug coverage from a plan, you should have received notification from your plan telling you whether or not you should enroll in a Medicare Drug Plan. DO NOT enroll in a Medicare Drug Plan until you understand your current coverage – you could lose important benefits!

If you currently have Medigap plans H, I or J:

Medigap plans H, I and J will not be considered creditable for Medicare Prescription Drug coverage. If you have Medigap plan H, I or J, you have two options:

1. You can keep your current coverage – the advantage is that there are no formulary requirements with plans H, I or J. If you decide to get a Medicare Drug plan later, you will have premium penalties.
2. You can get a Medicare drug plan. Your drug costs may be much lower than using plan H, I or J. You have the right to change your Medigap coverage to a plan without drug coverage without a health screening as long as you **a)** stay with the same company; **b)** change coverage within 63 days of getting a Medicare drug plan; **and c)** change Medigap coverage by May 15 2006.

If you have questions or need help, you can call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or call HICAP for in-person assistance at 443-3000.

Anne Antoville is HICAP Manager for Humboldt and Del Norte Counties.



“Thanks For My Independence!” Campaign

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Advisory Board is offering IHSS recipients and private-pay recipients a chance to publicly thank their caregiver for the independence they provide. The thank-you's will be part of a full-page ad in several Humboldt County newspapers on July 4th. Last names will not be required, for privacy. If you would like to participate, contact Cindy Calderon at Tri-County Independent Living, (707) 445-8404, or e-mail her at cynthia@tilinet.org



Calendar of Coming Events

Alzheimer's Conference—A day-long workshop Tuesday, April 18th, with two Alzheimer's experts and authors, David Troxel and Elizabeth Brawley, giving presentations. \$45 fee. Food will be served. Call (707) 444-8254, ext. 202, for details.

Caregiver Celebration plans are in the works for both Southern and Eastern Humboldt sometime in May. Caregiver Services registry caregivers, watch your mail for your invitation!

Caregiver Trainings: Summer plans include an **In-Home Care Provider** training in Fortuna. Call Laura Patterson at 443-4363 (toll free 877-977-1604) for news on future trainings.

Independent Living Skills Workshops, presented by Tri-County Independent Living, 955 Myrtle Avenue, Eureka, are free and open to all people with disabilities: **Stress Management**, Wednesday, April 19th, 1:30 to 3 pm. **Nutrition & Exercise**, Wednesday, May 17th, 1:30 to 3 pm. Call (707) 445-8404 for more information.