

Caregiver Quarterly

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

Spring 2007
Volume 4 Issue 2

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.



How to reach us:

Caregiver Services

(707) 443-4363

Toll Free:

877-977-1604

FAX: (707) 443-8946

caregiver@a1aa.org

Willow Creek:

(530) 629-1139

FAX: (530) 629-1148



Caregiver Services
is located at
808 E Street in Eureka.

(Mail Address:
3300 Glenwood Street
Eureka CA 95501)

Do You Have Caregiver Burnout?

By Anthony Antoville

Many demands are put on caregivers by care recipients and family members. But, the greatest demands are often those we place on ourselves! In the past, it may have been common for our parents or grandparents to take care of aging family members while maintaining a home and raising children. In today's society, it is usually expected that "we can do it all" while often requiring two incomes to keep together a household.

Caregiving carries with it huge demands for our time and energy. The truth is that when we do not take the time to care for ourselves, we have little energy for others. When this happens, we may be heading for "caregiver burnout." As caregivers, we are often so busy caring for others that we can forget to take care of our own emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing.

There are many causes of caregiver burnout. One of the most common is changing the roles between the caregiver and care receiver. Many people become confused when the job of caregiving is thrust upon them. And, it can be hard for us to separate our role as caregiver from our role as spouse, lover, child or friend. It can be especially hard when the line that separates parent

and child roles begins to blur. Caring for a parent changes a lifetime of family dynamics for both the parent and the caregiving child.

Another reason for burnout may be the unrealistic expectation that a caregiver should be able to make the person in their care get better. This often can be the case when caring for someone with a progressive disease, such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.

Many caregivers are frustrated by a lack of money, resources and skills to be able to plan and manage their own lives while providing care for another person. They cannot recognize when they are suffering burnout and eventually get to the point where they cannot take care of their own lives. They may even become sick themselves.

Symptoms of caregiver burnout are similar to the symptoms of stress and depression. They may include:

- Withdrawal from friends, family and other loved ones.
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed.
- Feeling blue, irritable, hopeless and helpless.
- Changes in appetite, weight or both.
- Changes in sleep patterns.
- Getting sick more often.
- Feelings of wanting to hurt yourself or the person for whom you are caring.
- Emotional and physical exhaustion.

(Continued on page 2)

A Star for Eleanor Smithers

By Teresa Christian



While Eleanor Smithers has been a professional caregiver for four years, you could say she has been a caregiver all her life. When she was in high school, she took care of her grandmother. This is when Eleanor first discovered she enjoyed working with seniors. Later in life, when a close friend suggested she consider caregiving as a profession, Eleanor tried it and loved it.

Eleanor likes working with seniors and people with disabilities. She believes seniors have a lot to offer with their stories and wisdom. Her clients are like family to her. She sees that part of her caregiver role is to appropriately advocate for her clients to help them meet all their needs. As a professional caregiver, she may be able to give information about resources that the family does not know about. She enjoys the give and take and working one-on-one with her client and their family. She views the process as a "team" with each member being a vital part.

While being a caregiver, whether professional or informal, can be quite rewarding, Eleanor says, "It is critical to take good care of yourself. If you don't, you'll have little left to give to the person in your care."

Teresa Christian is a Resource Specialist with Caregiver Services.

Caregiver Burnout ... (Continued from page 1)

Here are some steps you can take to help prevent caregiver burnout:

- Find someone you trust -- such as a friend, co-worker or neighbor -- to talk to about your feelings and frustrations.
- Set realistic goals, accept that you may need help with caregiving, and turn to others for help with some tasks.
- Be realistic about your loved one's illness, especially if it is a progressive disease such as Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.
- Don't forget about yourself because you're too busy caring for someone else. Set aside time for yourself, even if it's just an hour or two. Remember, taking care of yourself is not a luxury. It is an absolute necessity for caregivers.
- Talk to a professional. Most therapists, social workers, and clergy members are trained to counsel individuals dealing with a wide range of physical and emotional issues.
- Take advantage of respite care services. Respite care provides a temporary break for caregivers, ranging from a few hours of in-home care to a short stay in a nursing home or assisted living facility.
- Know your limits and do a reality check of your personal situation. Recognize and accept your potential for caregiver burnout.
- Educate yourself. The more you know about the illness, the more effective you will be in caring for the person with the illness.
- Develop new tools for coping. Remember to lighten up and focus on the positive. Use humor to help deal with everyday stresses.
- Stay healthy by eating right and getting plenty of exercise and sleep.
- Accept your feelings. Feeling angry or frustrated about your responsibilities or the person for whom you are caring is normal. It does not mean you are a bad person or a bad caregiver.
- Join a caregiver support group. Sharing your feelings and experiences with others in the same situation can help you manage stress, locate helpful resources and reduce feelings of frustration and isolation.

Anthony Antoville is Manager of Caregiver Services.

Finding Help for Caregiver Burnout

- ◆ Caregivers of people with Alzheimer's and other dementias, as well as those assisting people with diagnoses including Stroke, MS and ALS, are encouraged to come to a support group of their choice. Groups meet in Arcata, Eureka, Fortuna, Garberville, McKinleyville and Willow Creek at various times. Call 443-4875 for details. The Garberville group (call 923-2275) is a joint collaboration between the Redwood Caregiver Resource Center and the Alzheimer's Day Care Resource Center.
- ◆ Caregiver Services has a 3-page list of support groups in Humboldt County for patients, family, caregivers and friends. For a free copy, call (707) 443-4363 or toll free: 1-877-977-1604.
- ◆ On the Internet, www.caregiver.com provides many helpful resources and information.

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

Have A Bowl of Soup!

By Michele Swift

Seniors in the Klamath-Trinity region are once again being served a wonderful lunch at the bi-monthly **Senior Chow & Chat**. The event, formerly held at the St. Joseph Resource Center, is now being held at Cinnabar Sam's restaurant on Hwy 299. Chad Paine, Cinnabar's manager, has graciously offered the conference room for our lunch, and Chad makes the best soup! The Buttercup Bakery donates scrumptious desserts, and Bob's Market donates rolls. We are so fortunate that the community supports our seniors!



The **Senior Chow & Chat** is held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month promptly at 12:00 noon. Come and enjoy a bowl of soup, fun chat...and best of all – it's FREE! For more information, call Michele Swift at Caregiver Services in Willow Creek, Area 1 Agency on Aging, at (530) 629-1139.

Michele Swift is a Resource Specialist in the Caregiver Services Willow Creek office.

Remember to Call In!

Registry Caregivers—Remember, if you want to keep getting job referrals, call our **Active Caregiver Call-In Line** at (707) 441-0444, extension 222, and leave a message on the Voice Mail the first week of each month. Give your name, phone number, the hours you are available to work, and the type of care you will provide.

If your schedule changes any time during the month, call in again and update us. If you have hours available at any time during the month, call in and update so we can refer you to new clients.

If you have already called to tell us your schedule is full, you don't need to keep calling in every month. Your name will not be given out to consumers until you let us know you are available.

Private Medicare Plans- Be Careful In Choosing Them!

By Anne Conrad-Antoville

In January 2006, Humboldt County had private Medicare plans available for the first time. Last year there were four private Medicare plans available locally. Beginning in January 2007, there were 20 private Medicare plans, also called Medicare Advantage plans available for local Medicare beneficiaries.

Important Facts

- If you sign up for a Medicare Advantage plan, Original Medicare will no longer be your insurance carrier. The private insurance carrier will cover your claims.
- The Medicare Advantage plans still require you to pay your Medicare part B premium.
- Medicare Advantage plans are required to cover the services which are covered by Original Medicare, but they may cover the services at a different cost, or they may require prior authorization for some services such as medical equipment. Some plans may offer additional benefits that Original Medicare does not offer.
- You may not keep a Medigap plan if you get a Medicare Advantage plan.
- Many employer plans will not pay co-pays for Medicare Advantage plans.

Medicare Advantage Plans and Medi-Cal

If you have Medi-Cal with Medicare, Medi-Cal currently covers your Medicare co-pays as long as you go to providers who accept Medi-Cal. According to Medi-Cal, Medi-Cal will NOT cover co-pays if you change your Medicare coverage to a Medicare Advantage plan.

Check with your Doctor

According to the Humboldt-Del Norte Medical Society, many doctors will not accept the new Medicare Advantage plans. Be sure to check with your doctor before choosing a plan!

If you need help, you can call the Area 1 Agency on Aging HICAP at (707) 444-3000.

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



Important Dates for Caregivers Are Coming Up!

In-Home Care Provider Free Trainings

- ◆ **Fortuna, March 19th through April 23rd**
Monday and Wednesday evenings, 6 to 9 pm. Call Michelle Guthrie at (707) 443-4363 or toll free: 1-877-977-1604 to pre-register.
- ◆ **Willow Creek, April 14th through May 19th**
Saturdays, 9 am to 3:30 pm. Call Michele Swift at (530) 629-1139 or Michelle Guthrie at 1-877-977-1604 to pre-register.

Caregiver Celebration & Resource Fair

If you are a Caregiver Services registry caregiver in Southern or Eastern Humboldt, watch your mail for our special invitation to the ***Caregiver Celebration and Resource Fair*** in your area! Plans are underway now for two events: one in Garberville in April and one in Willow Creek in May. You can bet there will be great food, door prizes and lots of fun in store!

The Caregiver Celebrations are presented by the Area 1 Agency on Aging and In-Home Supportive Services Public Authority.