

Caregiver Quarterly

A publication of Caregiver Services and Eldercare,
Programs 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 is available for family and professional caregivers.

Eldercare
is a care consultation service for working people whose aging parents or other relatives need assistance.

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Spring brings hope, life, sun, new growth, flowers... We wish all of you the best as this year unfolds, and we offer with this issue some ways to lighten your day.



Make a Clean Sweep!

By Lucy Ingrey

Spring brings to mind flowers, showers and ... cleaning! While spring cleaning is probably not anyone's favorite topic, the season of new beginnings is a good time to take a look at some things in fresh air and new light.

Medications – Gather up prescription medications from **all** your doctors and take them to your next appointment. Make sure you know what each medication is for and that you are taking the correct amount. Discuss with your doctor any herbal and over the counter medications that you take. Throw away any medications you do not need to take or ones that have expired. Check your first aid kit to make sure nothing is out of date in there. If you don't have a first aid kit, make one now.

Refrigerator / kitchen cupboards – Often there are things in the fridge and cupboards that we know have expired. Now is the time to check dates and throw out expired foods and wipe down shelves. Put frequently used items on easy to reach shelves and put an open box of baking soda in both to keep odors away. Refrigerators and freezers are more efficient when full, but if you don't

want a bunch of rotten food filling them up, fill water bottles to use up space.

Clean with fall prevention in mind – The first step is to remove obstacles and clutter. Make sure pathways are clear and electrical cords are not in walk zones. Remove throw rugs. Check light bulbs and replace any burned out ones. Good lighting can help reduce falls. Install grab bars in the bathroom. A raised toilet seat or a bedside commode may help with nighttime toileting. Ask your doctor to order a home visit from an Occupational Therapist, who can come to your home, assess for safety and make recommendations.

Other things to think about: Make sure the smoke detectors work and that everyone knows where the fire extinguisher is and how to use it. Make sure one family member or a trusted friend knows the names and phone numbers of your doctor, lawyer and bank, and where to find your important papers (a Will, Power of Attorney, insurance policies, etc.)

That's just the beginning! See inside this newsletter for more tips and suggestions.

Lucy Ingrey is a Resource Specialist for Caregiver Services and Eldercare.

Simple Cleaning

Although many stores have safer alternatives to toxic cleaning supplies, most are very expensive. Cheaper versions are as simple as baking soda, white vinegar, water, scrubbing sponges and (occasionally) some elbow grease. Here are a few tips:

For dried, stuck food in the microwave, put a bit of baking soda in a bowl of water in the microwave and cook on high for 1 minute. Then use a sponge to wipe!

Sprinkle baking soda on fresh pet stains. Using rubber gloves, rub the baking soda in until it is lumpy. Let it sit for five minutes; then vacuum up the baking soda. Now pour vinegar over the area. When it foams, blot it with a sponge. No stain, no odor!

Use vinegar to wash the windows, use newspaper to wipe them.

Got mold in your shoes? Put some vinegar on a sponge and wipe off the mold.



Brown Bag It!

Robin Dummer,
Registry Specialist at the
Caregiver Services
Willow Creek office,
welcomes seniors each

week to a Senior Social.

Seniors gather every Tuesday from noon to 1:30 in the Conference Room of the Willow Creek Community Center, next to Bob's Shopping Center. Robin says, "It's seniors visiting and eating. Some caregivers come along with their senior. It's a place to learn about available community resources.

Anyone interested in attending may call Robin at (530) 629-1139 for more information. Bring your own brown bag lunch or bring something to share.

Cast Aside Those Winter Blues!

By Laura Patterson

Spring is almost here. But on the North Coast, we still have some grey skies, foggy mornings and rain ahead. Weather can actually affect how we feel about ourselves and our surroundings. We will get the blues if we are not careful. Here are some ways to march those winter blues away!

Bring more light into your life. Open your curtains and shades. Replace regular incandescent light with full spectrum bulbs for a bit of natural light even on cloudy days.

Plan your spring garden. Pick out seeds and begin starts inside.

Plant a virtual garden. If you enjoy flowers but do not wish to get your hands dirty, you can look through seed catalogs and gardening magazines. Cut or tear out the flowers you like and paste them onto recycled paperboard (old cereal boxes work great). Then hang your garden where you can see it often.

On sunny days, go outside! Sit on the porch, go for a walk, take a drive to one of the local beaches to soak up a little sun.

Rent videos that remind you of summer: "Gidget," "The Seven Year Itch," "State Fair," "Summer Holiday," "Summer Stock," and "Summertime" are some you may remember.

Avoid foods high in sugar and starch that zap your energy.

Get out of the house. Volunteer to help children, animals or seniors in your community. Call the Volunteer Center of the Redwoods at 442-3711 for more information on volunteer opportunities near you.

Change your surroundings. Move your furniture around, paint a wall yellow or make some new curtains. If you cannot do these things yourself, ask a friend to help you out or just enjoy watching one of the many home makeover shows on TV.

Laura Patterson is a Resource Specialist for Caregiver Services.

Caregiver Quarterly is published four times a year by Caregiver Services and Eldercare, programs 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: caregiver@a1aa.org

Call HICAP Before You Buy A Medicare Prescription Discount Card!

By Anne Antoville

In May, Medicare approved discount cards will be available for prescription drugs. The cards should cost \$30 per year and will only be available during specific enrollment periods. The cards will be offered by private companies who will be able to use the "Medicare" name. The cards should provide a 10 to 15% savings on prescription drugs, some non-prescription drugs and insulin supplies.

Not Everyone Can Buy the Card

You can **NOT** buy this card if:

- You have Medi-Cal with **no** Share of Cost.
- You have Tricare or Federal Employee Health Benefits.
- You have Employer or Retiree Health Insurance with Rx benefits.
- You have an Employer or Retiree Medicare Supplement with Rx benefits

Be Careful – Before You Choose, You Will Need to Compare Cards!

The cards offered by the various private companies are not required to provide the same discounts, and they are not required to keep the same discounts, or cover the same drugs over time. You can contact HICAP for card comparisons, or you may compare cards on the internet at: www.medicare.gov

Help for Low Income Beneficiaries

If your yearly income is currently \$12,123 or less for single persons and \$16,362 or less for married couples, the discount card will be available at no cost. You will have a \$600 credit per year to use for drug costs. While you are using the \$600 credit, you will pay a 10% co-pay for drugs. After you have used all of the \$600 credit, you will receive a 10 to 15% discount on your prescriptions.

Medicare Discount Card? Or Medication Assistance Program?

Buying the card could disqualify you from many Medication Assistance Programs (MAP). If you currently get your prescriptions using a MAP, you may want to check with HICAP before you buy a Medicare Discount Card. A large percentage of people using a MAP save more than the \$600 annually.

Call HICAP in Humboldt at 443-9747; and in Del Norte at 464-5500 for more information about Medicare or Medication Assistance Programs.

Anne Antoville is HICAP Program Manager.

It's Time to Plant!

By Laura Patterson



Herb gardens are an inexpensive and fun way to get into gardening. You do not need much space, time or money to reap the rewards of an herb garden. It costs more to buy a sprig of rosemary at the grocery store than to buy one plant that will grow into a bush and provide you with fresh herbs for many years. Growing your own herbs will give you a sense of accomplishment, give you something to look forward to and provide you with fresh, healthy additions to your favorite meals.

First, pick a planter. You can find inexpensive terra-cotta or plastic pots at a garden center. You can also take a look around your house, use your creativity and discover fun and useful herb planters. Some ideas include that old broken tea pot you have been meaning to fix, a metal bucket, an old wheel barrow or a dishpan. If you are short on space, try a strawberry planter, a planting bag or hanging baskets. Buy some all purpose potting soil that has good drainage. Let's start planting!

If you are an indoor gardener, Aloe, Basil, Lemon Balm, Mint, Parsley, Pennyroyal and Tarragon do well inside, in indirect light. If you have a patio or a window box in mind, these outdoor plants do well in sun or partial shade: Catnip, Chamomile, Chives, Cilantro/ Coriander, Dill, Echinacea, Lavender, Marjoram, Oregano, Rosemary, Sage and Thyme. Most of these can be started from seed indoors, or you can buy small plants at local garden centers, grocery stores and drug stores.

Sow your seeds inside, and place near a south-facing window. Make sure the room temperature is around 70 degrees, so they will grow. You can cluster the seeds and mix several kinds together. Mist the soil daily until seeds germinate. Once plants are up and have several leaves, you will want to water when the top of the soil dries out about a half inch to an inch.

(In a future issue, Laura will tell all about harvesting and using herbs.)