



Winter 2005

Keeping In Touch

News For Family Caregivers

by Lynn Cibuzar, LSW, DARTS Service Coordinator

May We Help You?

Where does a caregiver turn when they need help caring for their loved one, but can't afford to hire help? One option is the Alternative Care Program – it's for people over 65 who want to stay in their own home and who have certain income and asset limitations. To qualify, the asset guidelines are fairly liberal – less than \$25,000 for a single person and less than \$49,000 for a couple (not including their house). Anyone eligible for the program may be asked to pay a portion of the care costs depending on their financial situation.

The program, administered by Dakota County, can pay for a variety of services and products, such as respite care, adult day care, home health care, Meals on Wheels, nursing visits, medical supplies, incontinence products, and homemaking/chore services.

For more information about the Alternative Care Program, call Dakota County Public Health Nursing at 651-554-6115.

Music is the Universal Language

Music can help refresh the body and the soul. As a caregiver, you may often feel emotionally stressed and physically exhausted from all the work you do. Music can be a long-awaited friend.

The music you listen to can, at times, bring about emotions that you'd rather not have (for instance, sadness, anger, loneliness), but what a healing process it could be for you...to let go of unwanted feelings and replace them with ones of hope.

You may hear a song familiar to you and, in listening to it, you can recall a whole host of memories about your life and the feelings you had during those times. For example, hearing "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" may take someone back to a time when they were dancing with a loved one...feeling safe, secure, and loved. You could recall those same feelings just by listening to the music, closing your eyes and picturing the moment. Others may hear the same song and feel lonely because it brings back painful memories of the past. Music's power can grow as we age and associate memories with music. It connects us to others and is an important symbol of life events. Think about the song "Happy Birthday."

Music has great power to relieve anxiety and pain, provide distraction, and bring healing. Some researchers have found that relaxing to music helps decrease muscle tension and increase endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. Some people sleep better, feel more at ease, and have more energy.

Here are some tips on using music for you and, perhaps, your care receiver.

- Play music that has meaning to you – perhaps hymns or classical or country music.
- Pick music that's consistent with your mood. Don't try to change your mood to match the music. If you feel sad, play or sing something that allows you – even encourages you – to feel sad. Let it out. Express it.

“HUMAN BEINGS ARE IN
NEED OF MUSIC –
NOT AS FRILL AND LUXURY
BUT AS A BASIC NECESSITY.”
– THEODORE BIKEL, MUSICIAN

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- Avoid overstimulation – slower tempos and melodic music works well. And avoid constant music as it may actually increase irritability or restlessness. Instead, listen to music on and off throughout the day.
- Try incorporating music into daily activities, perhaps turning on some relaxing music when taking a bath or before retiring for the night.
- Anticipate when you may experience stress and try listening to music for 10 minutes before something you expect to be stressful.
- Reminisce to old favorites.

(Article adapted from information from Debbie Tonsager, RMT)

Give Me a Break

Ethel cares for her husband and enjoys doing some yard work when it's not overwhelming. Her many maple trees are loved and admired until November when the leaves fall! One year Ethel had 45 bags of leaves after raking and was exhausted for a week afterward. Then she heard about DARTS' outdoor chore service and signed up for our fall clean-up. She could enjoy watching the leaves fall and not worry about getting the raking done.



DARTS' Outdoor Chore Service is for homeowners 60 and older who need help keeping their yard tidy. It's very affordable – the cost is based on your income and the type of work you request. The work may be done by professional staff or by volunteers supervised by DARTS. Outdoor tasks include snow

shoveling, mowing lawns, raking leaves, weeding gardens, cleaning gutters, trimming small trees and shrubs, washing windows, removing storm windows or screens (from one-story homes) and painting. We can also help with cleaning garages or basements, packing boxes, and moving furniture. Call DARTS at 651-455-1560 for more information or to sign up!

From the Caregiver Library

The DARTS Caregiver Library has seven new booklets from The National Parkinson Foundation that comprehensively approach understanding and living with Parkinson's Disease. The booklets are *What You and Family Should Know*, *Medications, Activities of Daily Living: Practical Pointers for Parkinson's Disease*, *Nutrition Matters*, *Caring and Coping*, *Speaking Out* (information on speech, voice and swallow functioning), and *Fitness Counts*. Stop by DARTS and check out one of these booklets or call 651-455-1560 to have one mailed to you.

To get your own free copies, call 1-800-327-4545 or visit www.parkinson.org and click on "Library/Publications." The Foundation also has the booklets in Spanish.

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