

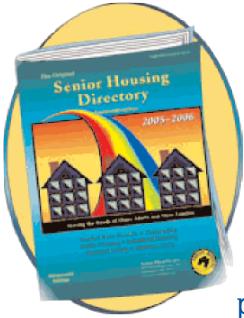


November 2005

Keeping In Touch

News For Family Caregivers

by Lynn Cibuzar, LSW, DARTS Service Coordinator



The Senior Housing Directory (2005-2006 edition) is available by calling DARTS at 651-455-1560. This directory includes a comprehensive list of housing options for older persons in the 11-county metropolitan area.

- Ownership: Condos, Cooperatives, Townhomes, and Single Family Homes
- Continuing Care Communities
- Rental Housing (market rate, subsidized, public housing)
- Assisted Living
- Memory Care Residences

May We Help You?

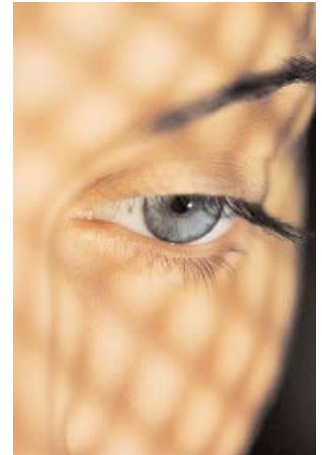
The website BenefitsCheckUp.com is an online tool that helps seniors and their families find programs that dramatically reduce the cost of prescription drugs. *The new Medicare drug plan covers 95 percent of prescription costs for seniors with limited means. But many seniors who qualify won't benefit because they're not aware of the program.* The website above is easy to use and completely confidential. Within 10 minutes, you'll get a personalized report about programs you qualify for and information on how to enroll.

The website also features assistance with rent, property taxes, heating bills, meals, and other needs. *If you want some help using this website, please call DARTS' information specialist, 651-455-1560, and we can do the work with you.*

CHOOSE TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE

Often we become caregivers very suddenly, without warning. A husband is diagnosed with cancer, a child is in a car accident, or a parent has a stroke. Other times, caregiving creeps up on us. Mom is forgetting things and we slowly start taking on some administrative tasks and calling her more often. One day we realize she can no longer live safely on her own.

Regardless of how we become a caregiver, it's often a shock and always an emotionally draining experience. In the "hubhub" that follows – reorienting our schedules, searching for resources, fearing the future, and facing day-to-day challenges – we never stop to think about what has happened and devise a plan that takes into account the health and well being of all concerned, including ourselves. We just go on automatic pilot and do, do, and do.



It's vitally important, however, that we do stop, take a breath, and try to gain some control over the situation rather than let the situation control us. We need to choose to take charge of our lives.

What does that mean: Choose to take charge of our lives? Obviously we cannot control everything that happens to us, or to our loved ones. But we can make active choices about how we will deal with the circumstances of our lives.

We can look at life as a glass half full, or we can try to make lemonade out of our lemons. We can choose to martyr ourselves in the interests of our loved one, or we can set limits on what we can and cannot so we don't have irrevocable damage to our own health and other relationships. Caregiving is complicated. It's forever changing and usually involves a variety of people, not just the caregiver and the care receiver.

The choices that we can make during the course of our caregiving experience will change as circumstances change. It's hard to

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realistically make a decision about trying a risky experimental therapy when a loved one is asymptomatic. It's impossible to really imagine what it would be like to have a frail mother living with you if, right now, she is only 61 years old now and the picture of health.

Knowing that circumstances change, including our own health and capabilities, is vital to learning to take charge of our lives. Remembering that martyrdom always has a negative consequence is a wake-up call to caregivers who put everyone else's needs first and their own last. They're never recognizing that if they fall apart, there might not be another family member to take over.

Choosing to take charge of our lives means recognizing our strengths and our limitations and setting boundaries. *It's okay to say: "yes I can and will do this, but I'm sorry, I just can't do that."* Being a willing and loving caregiver doesn't mean you discard the word "no" from your vocabulary.

We need to know our own limits and the consequences of our actions. The lifting we could easily do five years ago may play havoc with our back today. Back when we started spending more time helping grandma, the kids didn't seem the worse for it, but now they're missing our attention and getting into trouble at school to prove it. Caregiving is a relationship between many people. Choosing to take charge of your life means you recognize that you are one of those people.

(Article adapted from www.caregiving101.org)

Believe in Yourself • Protect Your Health • Reach Out for Help

**NOVEMBER IS
NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH**

This nationally recognized observance that seeks to draw attention to the many challenges facing family caregivers, to advocate for stronger public policies around family caregiving issues, and to raise awareness about community programs that support family caregivers. November is a time to thank, support, educate, and celebrate more than 50 million family caregivers across the country.

Caring Every Day

Believe. Protect. Reach Out.

Give Me a Break

A NEW RESPITE PROGRAM IS STARTING IN WEST ST. PAUL. It's called **The Gathering** and is coordinated by Lyngblomsten, DARTS, and other community partners.

The Gathering provides a safe, enjoyable place for people experiencing early-stage memory loss. Up to eight participants will meet Tuesdays from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at a church in West St. Paul. A \$15 suggested donation covers the cost. **The Gathering** will include activities like music, sing-a-longs, crafts, cards, discussion groups, current events, speakers, exercises, and field trips, as well as lunch. The get-together is staffed by volunteers who have special training in understanding the needs of persons with memory loss. To learn more or to set up a home visit with Carolyn Klaver, Registered Nurse at Lyngblomsten, call 952-261-5235.



If you do not want to receive this newsletter, call DARTS at 651-455-1560 and ask to have your name removed from the Keeping In Touch mailing list.