



Keeping In Touch

Spring 2000

News For Family Caregivers

Normal Memory Loss: When Should You be Concerned?

You and your family are invited to attend this two-session program (June 20 and 27) that covers what's normal memory loss and what's not. Both sessions are free and will be held in Burnsville at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Christian Life Center, Room 134, 200 East Nicollet Blvd. from 7:00 - 9:00 PM. No registration is needed.

On Tuesday June 20th, Annette Cunningham, DARTS Service Coordinator, will focus on learning how memory works, what factors affect memory, how do we remember and why do we forget, and techniques to improve memory.

On Tuesday June 27th, Kathy Pierson, DARTS Service Coordinator, will look at the causes of memory loss, definition and symptoms of dementia, communicating with a person who has memory loss, and dealing with difficult behavior related to memory.

Long-term Care Options Changing

Those of us who work in the field of aging are aware of the dramatic changes taking place with long-term care options, but this information from The Minnesota Board on Aging may enlighten you.

A report presented to the legislature in February by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) suggests that the time has come for a broad review of public policies related to nursing home care.

Many nursing homes in the state are having financial problems these days. They face staff shortages, financial constraints, increased paperwork, and unpredictable payment rates. In addition, falling demand for nursing home care is predicted to continue.

One reason for the decreased demand is rapidly emerging alternatives that older people find more attractive, such as assisted living facilities, board and lodging homes, and adult foster care.

In 1996 there were less than 200 such alternatives. Last year there were nearly 600 "housing with services" providers in the state.

Nursing home stays have also gotten shorter. In 1990 the median stay in a nursing home was 300 days. In 1997 it was 53 days. The change is due to an increase in "subacute care" (for people who need a short period of intense rehabilitation after a hospital stay) and to the fact that residents entering nursing homes now are nearer the end of their life than they were in the past.

"The market already is changing nursing homes," said Maria Gomez, DHS Assistant Commissioner of Continuing Care. "This is a hard time for nursing homes. We want nursing homes to evolve, but not become extinct."

According to the report, nursing homes are evolving into three major types:

- Subacute care, which is offered to people who need intense rehabilitation after a hospital stay for a stroke, broken bone or operation.
- Specialized long-term care (hospice, for example, or care for those with advanced Alzheimer's disease).
- Integrated community care, which can include private apartments, adult day care, home health care, and other services.

A number of nursing homes are also choosing to downsize and offer private rather than semi-private rooms. Others are diversifying to stay financially sound.

The report also suggests creating incentives to shape the development of certain service models and provide support to some facilities that want to close. "Market forces alone should not 'right size' the industry," the reports says, "because transition may put vulnerable older Minnesotans and many facilities at risk."

So love the elders.

Honor them.

Go to them with a pure heart,
unblinded by notions of
false reverence
or obligation, and unaffected
by self-serving feelings of pity.

Listen to them.

Observe them like a far-off country
that you will someday visit,
and learn the
lessons that they have to teach.

If you honor and respect them,
and allow them to share
the fruits of their experience,
however simple those fruits
might be,
you will gain a gift you can
get nowhere else.

You will gain the knowledge
of your past, and the wisdom
to understand your future.

Simple Truths by Kent Nerburn

may we help you?

Adult Day Care Programs may be an answer

Many older adults and people with special needs live successfully in their own homes or with family members, but may feel isolated and need social contacts. Adult Day Care Programs may be one answer.

They provide a safe place for adults to go during the day and allow their caregivers to take a break. Here they can make new friends, take part in a variety of recreational activities, have a nutritious meal, or avail themselves of such personal services as bathing and a barber or beauty shop or a wide range of therapies and health services.

These centers may be used on a regular or part-time basis. The best way to learn about them is to visit the center nearest you. Is it what you need? Find out about the costs and what's included and whether financial assistance is available.

There are three Adult Day Care Programs in Dakota County:

- Ebenezer Ridges in Burnsville
- Ebenezer Rich Valley in Rosemount
- Common Sense in South St. Paul

Call Vicky at DARTS Information Desk, 651-455-1560, for more details.

From the Caregiver Library

The Caregiver Library housed at DARTS contains a section on strokes. We have several books and videos from The American Heart Association that are excellent resources. Five of the videos make up a set titled "Coming Back."

The first one is "You're Not Alone" and it offers stroke survivors and their families hope and encouragement as they create a new life after stroke. It discusses physical and emotional aspects of stroke, the role of support groups, and the importance of reducing the risk of another stroke.

"A Gift of Caring" is designed to help caregivers help a survivor begin coming back from a stroke. It discusses the responsibilities a caregiver faces, as well as the importance of setting limits and avoiding burnout.

"Recovering After a Stroke" illustrates therapeutic home aids and exercises for stroke survivors.

"Stroke Survivor's Workout" has a physical therapist leading 30 minutes of strengthening and flexibility exercises that can be performed from a sturdy chair or wheelchair.

"What Every Person Needs to Know" is perfect for educating others about the importance of stroke prevention, early detection and emergency treatment.

These and many more books and videotapes are available by calling Alicia at 651-234-2246. We can mail these to you at no cost.

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.