



May 2006

# Keeping In Touch

News For Family Caregivers

by Lynn Cibuzar, LSW, DARTS Service Coordinator

## Give Me a Break!

It's not often that a new respite program is developed for caregivers, but **Common Sense Services** is now offering overnight respite care at their site. They began in 1990 as an adult day center in the former emergency room of Divine Redeemer Hospital. Common Sense Services now has in-home services, a therapeutic support center, and day and overnight respite. The adult day program runs from

Common Sense Services  
724 19th Ave. N Suite 100  
South St. Paul • 651-552-0288  
www.commonsense4seniors.net

6:30 AM –  
6:00 PM;  
then  
overnight  
respite hours

begin. Common Sense will provide supervision, socialization, some therapy, and assistance with eating, dressing, and using the restroom. The overnight respite fee runs from \$19.00-\$21.00 an hour depending on the client's needs. Funding assistance is available for low-income clients.

For adult day center participants at Common Sense, the therapeutic support center can provide physical, occupational, and speech therapy, therapeutic massage, gait training, assistive device evaluation, and fall prevention training at no additional cost beyond the day program's hourly fee.

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CHOICES FOR INDEPENDENCE

## INHERITING MEMORIES



*Recently, my mother was cleaning out closets and came across the silver-plated coffee set in the original cardboard box that she had ordered from a door-to-door salesman before her marriage in 1957. She explained how special it was for her to have purchased this set, and how she had to order it on a monthly payment plan because she was a poor working nurse at the time. When she married my father, she was anxious about bringing up her monthly debt to him. It was fun to hear the story, and she had polished the set because she wanted me to have it. She had already pictured in her mind where it belonged in my home. That's where it sits now, and I smile when walking past.*

(The following information is courtesy of Marlene S. Stum, Ph.D., Family Social Science, University of Minnesota)

*Most families have these kinds of heirlooms, and it is a gift to hear the stories behind the objects. It's also a gift if the giver is able to sort out who is to receive the items and make those wishes known. Just before Anna was about to enter a nursing home at the age of 85, she held a family gathering to discuss who should get her personal belongings. With each of her four children gathered, Anna shared family history and stories that went with the important possessions in her life, wishes were expressed, and decisions made. Six months later when Anna died, her children not only held onto her possessions, but also the stories of her life. By making inheritance decisions ahead of time, Anna prevented disagreements about who should receive what items.*

Almost everyone has personal belongings, such as wedding photographs, a baseball glove, or a yellow pie plate, that hold meaning for them and for other members of their family. What we've learned by listening to families and attorneys is that it's often the non-titled personal property that creates the greatest challenges for families when estates are divided not the money. When doing estate planning, families too often talk about the house or the investments, but forget to plan ahead or discuss personal possessions. Do you know what items have special meaning or value in your family and why? Do you know how to get started to communicate and plan ahead?

### Families and Personal Property Inheritance: A Top Ten List for Decision-Making

1. Recognize that **decisions about personal belongings are often more challenging than decisions about titled property.** Assuming such

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decisions are unimportant or trivial can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts.

2. Recognize that **inheritance decisions can have powerful consequences – emotional as well as economic.** Decisions about personal property involve dealing with emotional and potential financial value connected to objects accumulated over a lifetime and across generations of family members.

3. When decisions are made prior to death, the decisions can reflect the owner's wishes, and special memories and stories may be shared. **Planning ahead rather than waiting until a crisis or death offers more choices and a chance for thoughtful communication.**

4. Issues of power and control do not disappear in inheritance decisions. **Unresolved conflicts among parents, adult children, siblings, and others are often at the heart of what goes wrong with inheritance decisions.** Listen for feelings and emotions, watch for blaming, and determine if you can agree to disagree if conflicts arise.

5. **Remember that different perceptions of what's "fair" are normal and should be expected.** Those involved need to uncover the unwritten rules and assumptions about fairness that exist among family members.



6. Being fair does not always mean being equal. In fact, **dividing personal property equally is sometimes impossible.**

7. Individuals who have input and agree on how decisions are made are more likely to feel the outcomes of those decisions are fair.

8. Discussing what those involved want to accomplish helps reduce mistaken assumptions and misunderstood intentions and makes choosing distribution options easier.

9. Identifying items that have special meaning can help avoid inaccurate assumptions about who should get what. **Not everyone will find the same items meaningful.**

10. **Putting wishes in writing**, typically in a separate listing mentioned in a will, reduces the dilemmas and decisions for estate executors and surviving family members.

Help for determining how to handle personal possessions is available in **"Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate Workbook: A Guide to Passing on Personal Possessions."** The workbook is a step-by-step guide filled with worksheets, practical suggestions, proven strategies, and real-life stories. To order call 1-800-876-8636 or visit [www.yellowpieplate.umn.edu](http://www.yellowpieplate.umn.edu). (Item #MI-6686-WG, \$12.50 plus shipping and handling)

## From the Caregiver Library

DARTS has purchased two new videos that educate caregivers about mid- to advanced-stage Alzheimer's disease. *How to Communicate with Someone Who Has Alzheimer's Disease or Related Dementia* describes how Alzheimer's disease affects language and provides communication techniques. The second video, *Caring for Someone with Mid- to Late-Stage Alzheimer's Disease*, explores the challenges of advanced dementia and how caregivers can adapt to those challenges, including pain management, incontinence and toileting, and balancing the day for your loved one.

A person with Alzheimer's disease has difficulty expressing needs, is less able to reason, and may lose awareness of socially acceptable actions. Tips from the videos include:

- Respect the person's feelings by acknowledging their concern. Once you have done this, you can then use distraction or stalling techniques, as needed.
- As the disease advances, repetitive questions become a crying out of just one word or sound. Take time to consider past habits, rituals, and values and you may discover something that is soothing in times of distress.
- No single technique is likely to be effective all the time.

To view these new videos, stop by DARTS and check them out, or call Alicia at 651-234-2245 to have them mailed to you.