



# Keeping In Touch

Fall 2002

**News For Family Caregivers**

*by Lynn Cibuzar, LSW, DARTS Service Coordinator*

## For Your Information

### **DARTS Offers a New Caregiver Service**

Eldercare Partners, a collaboration of six Twin Cities nonprofit organizations (including DARTS), is providing a new service for caregivers of older adults. The service focuses directly on the needs of family caregivers, so they have the skills, training, and emotional support to stay balanced and confident throughout their caregiving journey.

At DARTS, service coordinators Lynn Cibuzar, Kathy Wickner, and Karna Levy are professional family consultants for this new service. Family consultants provide caregiver coaching and counseling to spouses, adult children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and others who have taken on the role of caring for an older family member or friend. These caregivers may be involved with round-the-clock care or once-a-week care. They may live with the care receiver or arrange care from miles away. No matter what the circumstances, the Eldercare Partners caregiver service can be of help.

Caregiving doesn't always come naturally, especially when the care receiver's health requires new skills for managing all the related issues. For instance:

- Understanding and dealing with behavior associated with Alzheimer's disease can be a challenge.

*continued*

## **Some Tips for Talking about Money**

In some families, it's easier to talk about religion, sex, and politics than to discuss money matters. Many caregivers struggle with this issue. They want to be more informed to help their relative with financial matters, but it's difficult when someone wants the topic to remain private. Some older adults:

- Won't talk about money.
- Don't want to think about money.
- Will discuss money with another person, but not you.
- Have relied on advice from an unqualified or disreputable source.
- Will reassure you about the situation, while ignoring financial realities – like a collection notice.

Money situations can be frightening for the older adult and frustrating for family members. Always remember that there's more at stake here than money. Often it's a matter of pride and independence, so tread lightly.

Here are some suggestions for talking to family members:

- Ask questions about money, but do so tactfully and delicately. At a minimum, ask where financial information is kept.
- If your family member resists the first time, try again at another time or share your own experience of working with a financial advisor.
- Be creative. For example, one woman offered to videotape the contents of her mother's home for insurance purposes, in the event of a natural disaster. This allowed her to see and record the location of certain records and valuables.
- If the older adult refuses to discuss the issue altogether, back off for a time, but continue to pursue the issue.
- Always remember that it is the older adult's money and his or her decision.
- Accept that your elder may make financial mistakes, which are his or hers to make.
- Communicate your concerns to other family members, and if warranted, consider getting a medical evaluation of the elder to determine his or her capacity to make sound decisions.
- Be clear about what you will and won't do to help.
- Protect your own assets - don't give more financially than you can afford.
- Keep a record of all money that you spend for your elder's care.

*"Money is better than poverty, if only for financial reasons."*

*Woody Allen*

- Helping someone in a wheelchair get into and out of a car can be difficult without proper training.
- Asking other family members to pitch in with caregiving tasks may take extra strength.
- Getting a handle on financial issues related to long-term care can often be frustrating.

These are just a few of the practical, day-to-day issues a family consultant can help caregivers address.



The emotional side of caregiving has its own considerations. Family consultants will work with caregivers to help them understand the need to take care of themselves, which may mean getting a break (respite) from round-the-clock caregiving. It may also mean sharing feelings with the family consultant in a counseling role or getting involved in a caregiver support group suggested by the family consultant. Finally, it's possible the family consultant can help bring families together to solve caregiving-related problems.

If you or someone you know could benefit from having a family consultant for information, counseling, coaching, and support during the caregiving journey, please call **651-234-2262** and talk to Colleen (DARTS). This new service is available to caregivers in Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington Counties. The service is free of charge due to funding by the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging (through the federal Older Americans Act) and the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Voluntary contributions are welcomed.

(The other members of Eldercare Partners participating in this service are Catholic Charities, HSI--Human Services, Inc., Senior Community Services, Volunteers of America of Minnesota, and Wilder Foundation.)



## From the Caregiver Library

As our days get shorter and winter draws near, it may be time to renew your energy and gain new perspective. Our "inspiration" section of the caregiver library is filled with a variety of books – this section is one of the most requested in the entire library! To give you a flavor of its offerings, I want to highlight a couple selections.

*Forever Ours* by Dr. Janis Amatuzio, M.D. Dr. Amatuzio is a forensic pathologist in the Twin Cities and has written about the real-life “near death” and “after death” stories she has experienced in her job. A reviewer said it well: “She explores the mysterious realm of visions, experiences, and communications experienced by families at the threshold of the deaths of their loved ones. These vignettes, told with great compassion and warmth, offer a glimpse of the love that shines through the veil that falls at death.”

Dr. Amatuzio’s life work has been to speak for the deceased. Now, she has also provided a voice for family and friends by allowing their stories to be heard. *Forever Ours* has much to teach us about healing, loving, and the deep soul connections with our loved ones. This book is for anyone seeking solace and hope at the time of loss.

Lee Ann Chearney’s book, *Visits: Caring for an Aging Parent – Reflections and Advice*, is full of inspiration, affirmation, and useful advice for anyone participating in caregiving. The book is based on the author’s caregiver experiences with her mother, who has Parkinson’s disease, and her 88-year-old grandmother. *Visits* offers comfort and counsel for children of aging parents as they mark this difficult transition with their loved one. It is an excellent resource for those who have the unique opportunity to care for an aging loved one.

These and many more books and videotapes are available by calling Alicia at **651-234-2245**. You can find a listing of the caregiver library on [www.darts1.org/annual.htm](http://www.darts1.org/annual.htm). We can mail something from the library to you at no cost.



Don't forget to visit our web site for family caregivers of seniors at

[www.caregiverMN.org](http://www.caregiverMN.org)

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