



# Keeping In Touch

Fall 2000

News For Family Caregivers

## Resource fairs will give caregivers answers about senior services

The Dakota Senior Network, an organization of area professionals who work with seniors, is sponsoring two upcoming resource fairs for family caregivers of the elderly. If you need help with understanding and finding the many services available for your loved one, attend either event to get some answers and support.

Wednesday, October 18  
The Commons on Marice  
1380 Marice Drive  
Eagan  
4:00 - 7:00 PM

Wednesday, November 8  
Wentworth Library  
199 East Wentworth Ave.  
West St. Paul  
4:00 - 7:00 PM

Displays at the fair will include senior service providers offering in-home services, day care programs, assisted-living and other housing arrangements, transportation, and other resources of interest to caregivers. Admission at both fairs is free.

If you have questions, call Lynn Cibuzar at 651-234-2248.

### Like using the Internet?

We need you! DARTS is seeking focus group participants to help us understand how caregivers might best use on-line caregiver services. The focus group will be held October 24 at 7 p.m. Participants should have some familiarity with browsing web sites on the Internet. If interested, or for more information, call Lynn at 651/234-2248.



## Preventing Falls and Keeping In Balance

We've all heard the story, "I don't know what happened. I was standing up one second and on the floor the next! I guess I just slipped!" Falling down only takes a second, but recovering from a fall can take time and effort for the person who fell and for their caregiver.

Nearly one third of all people 65 or older fall each year, and that figure increases to 50% by the age of 85. Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalizations among older people. On top of that, Minnesota seniors have a higher incidence of falling than seniors in any other state!

### What happens as a result of falling?

- Although most people escape serious injury, about 5% fracture a bone, most often the wrist, spine, or hip.
- Falls that don't lead to injury often create a downward spiral of fear. After a fall, 25 to 40% of people fear another fall so much that they limit their activities. But that is exactly what they shouldn't do. Inactivity leads to a decrease in strength, agility, and balance that can result in another fall and a loss of independence.
- Falls are a contributing factor in 40% of nursing home admissions.
- Ninety percent of hip fractures treated annually occur as a result of a fall.

The good news is that most falls can be prevented! Here are some general tips to reduce risks:

- Review medications with your doctor or pharmacist. Some drugs, including over-the-counter drugs, can make you drowsy, dizzy, and unsteady.
- Limit your intake of alcohol. Even small amounts can impair your balance, coordination, and judgment.
- Avoid getting up too quickly after eating, lying down, or resting.
- Have your vision and hearing checked regularly and follow recommendations.
- Stay physically active and maintain a regular program of exercise. Check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- Use a cane or walker to help keep your balance on uneven or unfamiliar ground.
- Always wear supportive, nonskid, low-heeled shoes.
- Be extra careful if you have an acute illness (cold or flu) or a chronic illness that may cause fatigue, drowsiness, or poor coordination.
- Use a nightlight to light your way to the bathroom or a bedside commode at night.
- Falling is not normal. See your doctor if you've had a fall.

We are lucky to have a new program available to help seniors and their caregivers reduce the risk of falling. The Preventing Falls in Older Adults public education program is designed to prevent falls with Dakota County seniors. As part of the program, educational classes are held in a variety of locations. The class provides an overview of risk factors, helpful tips, and a home safety checklist. All attendees get a free gift as well as useful information.

The program also offers home assessments to look at an individual's risk factors, such as falls, medications, home safety, and mobility issues. After the assessment, specific recommendations will be given. There are no fees, but contributions will be accepted. For more information, please contact Debbie Hanka, Program Coordinator, 952-892-2200.

## *may we help you?*

DARTS is offering two classes that focus on depression issues related to seniors. Of special interest to caregivers is the focus on how to help those who are depressed. Tomilee Hughes, LICSW, Mental Health Therapist for Dakota County Older Adult Program, is the presenter. You are welcome at either or both classes.

**Wednesdays, October 18 and 25  
6:30- 8:30 PM**

Colleen Loney Manor Apartments  
1675 Livingston Avenue,  
West St. Paul

### **October 18**

- Why older people become depressed
- How to recognize depression
- When depression is more than "the blues"
- Caring for yourself while helping someone with depression

### **October 25**

- How to prevent and take control of depression
- Medications that may help depression

Please register by calling DARTS Information at 651-455-1560. The classes are free.

## *give me a break*

### **What Shall We Do Next?**

Boredom is one of the many problems that affect people who are ill. It can underlie many behavioral problems in someone who has a disease like Alzheimer's. If someone has plenty of energy, but lacks the ability to continue former activities, they face a constant struggle in finding ways to pass the time. And because they depend on caregivers, this becomes the caregiver's battle, too. Old habits may not survive, so new ones have to be created. Finding what works is often a matter of trial and error.

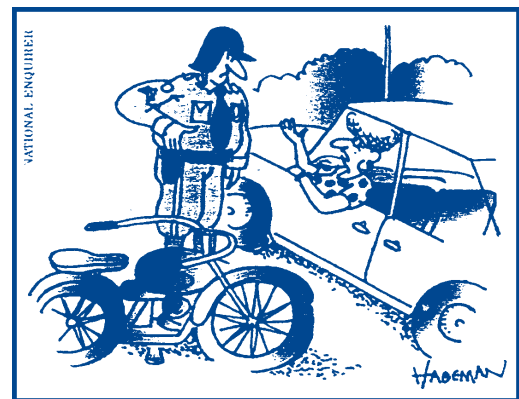
As a caregiver, you already have many demands on your time. To also be the source of full-time entertainment can be too much. To help you, as well as our respite volunteers and other visitor volunteers, we developed two lists of activities.

One activity list applies to someone who may be disabled and may have some cognitive impairment. The activities can be done easily at home, such as listening to books on tape, doing some simple crafts, and reminiscing.

The other list includes activities you can do with a senior who may or may not be ill. These activities are out-of-the house things like going to a bookstore and browsing, going to a museum like the Bell Museum of Natural History, and checking out the farmers' markets.

All activities are close to home and low in cost. We would be happy to provide either or both lists for free. Please call Alicia at 651-234-2245 and she will mail them to you.

"Why can't you people get organized? One day you take my license away and the next day you ask to see it."



*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.*