



Keeping In Touch

Summer 2003

News For Family Caregivers

by Lynn Cibuzar, LSW, DARTS Service Coordinator

CaregiverMN Website Gets a Facelift

The new look of DARTS' www.caregiverMN.org website for family caregivers reflects a multicultural

collaborative venture. DARTS has teamed with Neighborhood House, a multicultural community



center, to provide outreach and support services to Hmong and Spanish-speaking caregivers. Together, we're developing materials and identifying and modeling practices that support these caregivers in a culturally appropriate and meaningful way. The redesign of the CaregiverMN website and its expanded resources are one result of this collaborative effort.



Twin Cities Calendar of Events for Caregivers

Check out Eldercare Partners' on-line calendar of Twin Cities events for caregivers of seniors at www.goodage.org/EC_choose.php3 Use this resource to find a comprehensive listing of area events tailored for caregivers and seniors.

Creating Harmony in Your Caregiving Team

What can you do when you live far away from the family member who needs help? How can you help the primary caregiver? And, if you are the primary caregiver, what can be done to help you? Consider the following three tips.



1. Get your family to cooperate

It's a fairly common scenario: family is spread across the country and when mom or dad is ill, some support is needed. Everyone wants to be involved, but some people are more a nuisance than a help. For instance, imagine listening to advice over the phone line, and the advice is something you've already implemented, or worse, considered and rejected. Here are some ways to create harmony or, at least, eliminate dissonance.

If you're not the primary caregiver:

Learn to be a great listener. Let the primary caregiver talk and tell you what he or she is doing and blow off steam as needed. And never downplay what the caregiver is going through with comments like, "It doesn't seem so bad. Why are you so upset?" Ask instead, "How can I be of support to you at this moment?" or "What one thing can make your life a little easier?" and then try to make it happen.

Call the primary caregiver and tell them what a good job they are doing. Send a card or flowers to the caregiver, just like you would send to the person receiving care.

If you are the primary caregiver:

Communicate what is happening to the care receiver and to yourself. Don't try to protect the family from the reality of the situation. If you are doing well, let them know. If you need a break, let them know that too and see if, together, a solution unfolds that will keep things on track. If your family feels you are keeping them informed, they are less likely to second guess decisions and actions you have taken. Start making conference calls or group emails. Some families have even created a website to stay in touch.

2. Consider hiring a private care manager

There are many specialists in geriatrics who will do everything from assessing the needs of the elder and recommending a course of action, to arranging and supervising home aides, to making sure the fridge is stocked and the elder gets to the doctor. Fees vary, but can range from \$60-\$100 a hour. For referrals in the Twin Cities area, call Eldercare Partners at 651-917-1208; for Minnesota areas outside the Twin Cities, call the Senior Linkage Line at 800-333-2433; within the U.S., call the Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116.

(continued on back)

*Creating Harmony in Your Caregiving Team (continued)***3. Keep informed**

Information is power and can be a valuable tool in providing care even when you live away from the care receiver. You can become the expert on the illness or disease process. You can be the one who helps with financial matters. You can be the one who knows the changes in Medicare and Medical Assistance. Many books and websites exist that can be empowering to caregivers. Start by looking at the DARTS caregiver website, www.caregivermn.org, or by calling DARTS and asking for the bibliography of resources in our caregiver library. Once you are informed, you can share your knowledge with the others in your family.

Give Me a Break

Respite Volunteers Give a Break and Make a Friend

When you listen to Marie Schueller talk about being a volunteer, it's clear her words come from the heart. "With volunteering, you give only a little of your time and get so much back in return. You meet new people who turn into new friends. It's better than the stock market - you never lose on your investment," says Marie.

Marie is one of many dedicated DARTS volunteers in the Senior Companion program. She started volunteering at DARTS in 2001 and provides weekly respite for several caregivers in addition to visiting a senior once a week.

After retirement, Marie easily fit volunteering into her schedule. To her surprise, each new family and senior DARTS has assigned her has been a "perfect fit." She says, "each (senior) is just a wonderful person. And the people at DARTS are so down to earth, so positive."

Volunteering has brought Marie rewards from both the caregiver and care receiver. "Everyone is so appreciative, especially the caregivers, (for) giving them a little time away from caregiving. And, it's so surprising how positive my senior clients are in spite of their health problems. They all still have a good sense of humor!" To top it all off, Marie says, "I have even found something inside myself that I didn't know was there."

Marie is just one of some 30 volunteers at DARTS who provide respite for caregivers. If you would like to have a respite volunteer spend time with your family member, give us a call. Let Marie, or someone like Marie, find another perfect fit! Start by calling the information desk at 651-455-1560.



"...you give only a little of your time and get so much back in return."

May We Help You?

Finding an Attorney Who Specializes in Elder Law

Legal problems that affect the elderly are growing in number and complexity. For elders to avoid future problems, it's important that attorneys have a broad understanding of the laws that may impact a situation involving elders.

The National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA) is a nonprofit association that assists lawyers, legal bar organizations, and others who work with older clients and their families. Established in 1987, the Academy provides information, education, networking, and assistance to those who handle the many specialized issues around legal services for the elderly and disabled. The mission of NAELA is to establish its members as the premier providers of legal advocacy, guidance, and services that enhance the lives of people as they age.

To see a list of Minneapolis and St. Paul area NAELA members, go to www.caregivermn.org/images/cg-NAELA.pdf or call the DARTS information desk at 651-455-1560 and ask us to mail you a copy. To see the NAELA website with listings of attorneys across the country, go to www.naela.org or call DARTS and we will help you locate one.