



Keeping In Touch

Summer 2001

News For Family Caregivers

By Lynn Cibuzar, DARTS Service Coordinator

The Power of Touch

One time, as a volunteer, I was visiting a woman who had Alzheimer's. Unfortunately, the disease had progressed and prevented her from verbally communicating. I felt helpless, thinking there was nothing I could do for this woman. I wheeled her outside and as we sat together in silence, she bent her head down. I reached over and stroked her hair. She looked up at me with moist eyes and then put her head back down. I continued to stroke her hair for some time and then stopped. As I closed my eyes for a minute and bent my head down, I felt her hand on my head and she began to stroke my hair. This was one of the most touching moments of my life. It made me realize that we should never underestimate the significance of our presence in someone's life and the power of touch.

Sue Skinner
DARTS Resident Service Coordinator

Faith

When we walk to the edge of all the
Light we have
And take that step into the darkness
Of the unknown
We must believe that one of two
Things will happen---

There will be something solid for us
To stand on
OR
We will be taught to fly.

--Anonymous

Respite Volunteers: Giving Someone a Break

2001 has been named the *International Year of Volunteers*. DARTS is fortunate to have many volunteers who support caregivers. Our thanks to you all! Here is a profile of two respite volunteers, Lois Martz and Loran Nelson.

We all face personal hardships, but how many of us use them as a springboard to help others? Meet Lois Martz, a Senior Companion respite volunteer.

When you first meet Lois, her bubbly personality catches your interest. As you learn more, you come to admire her incredible, uplifting spirit. Lois has had numerous surgeries to mend brittle bones caused by arthritis, and has spent much of the last 2 years in a wheelchair. Through all this, she continued to volunteer. As she puts it, "You get such a place in your heart for caregivers and the person you stay with [as a respite volunteer]. I never dreamed volunteering could be so gratifying."

Lois first worked with DARTS as a Phon-a-thon volunteer, where she met her companion Loran Nelson. Lois is such an inspiration when it comes to volunteering that Loran became a respite volunteer too. He has learned a lot about people as a volunteer and feels strongly that "it is better to give than to receive."

Fitting volunteer work into their lives is a must. As Lois says, "It doesn't take up your whole life, and you can schedule your volunteering time around other needs. Until you try it, you have no idea how you can get involved [in helping someone] and the love and gratification you receive."

Both Lois and Loran see volunteering as a permanent part of their lives. And, because of their involvement with DARTS, they can see how they too could use DARTS' services in the future. Quite a full-circle example of "seniors serving DARTS and DARTS serving seniors."



Don't forget to visit our web site for family caregivers of seniors. www.caregiverMN.org offers to-the-point information about common caregiving issues, confidential e-mail communication with a DARTS advisor, recommended resources and web sites, and a bulletin board to share experiences and questions.

may we help you?

A New Adult Day Care

A new adult day care program has opened in Apple Valley. The 2nd Home Adult Day Center offers social activities, exercise, health monitoring, meals and snacks, assistance with personal care, massage therapy, and other services. Call the Center at 952-431-3575 for more information.

Adult Day Services programs are available for people who have physical or cognitive impairment, memory loss, or a need for therapy or who simply are lonely. Program benefits include increased mental stimulation, improved nutrition, health monitoring, increase in physical activity, and enhanced quality of life, as well as respite for the caregiver.

Other Adult Day Services programs in the county include Ebenezer Adult Day Center in Burnsville and Rosemount (952-898-8408 and 651-423-5926) and Common Sense Services in South St. Paul (651-552-0288).

From the Caregiver Library

Some of my favorite times with my grandparents were when they talked about their courtship. Hearing about the family rituals and funny happenings made their lives come alive.

The DARTS caregiver library has several magazines that can help elicit memories of old, such as *Reminisce*, *The Magazine That Brings Back the Good Times*, and *Good Old Days*, *The Magazine That Remembers the Best*. These are monthly or bimonthly magazines filled with stories, photos, recipes, songs, ads, and memories that are great fun to share with our elders. Here's a sample of features in one issue:

Think About It

Behind-the-scenes peek at TV's popular *Concentration* show

What a Kick!

Being a Rockette during WWII was hard work...and fun

She Made Do

Grandma knew how to stretch a buck before recycling

Slinky Still Popular

After 55 years, that spring thing still amuses us

Spice Guy

His collection of old spice tins recalls days of corner grocery

Covered Memories

Readers recall covered bridges that they crossed

Gown Dances Again

After 40 years, dress had another dance to go to

These magazines and many more books and videotapes are available by calling Alicia at 651-234-2245. We can mail them to you at no cost.

How "Respite" Can Work

"I am so lucky to have Marilyn! My mother enjoys her smile and weekly visit," said a caregiver who receives a respite volunteer. DARTS respite volunteers serve many families throughout Dakota county. They provide about four hours of respite per visit and can provide "safety and supervision." But, there are some limitations. For some people, a volunteer isn't the right person to provide respite. In that case, DARTS may recommend hiring someone to sit with the loved one or using an adult day health center. If the caregiver can pay for these services, DARTS will help find them. If a caregiver cannot afford these services, there are some county-funded programs that may be available, or DARTS has a fund to help pay for respite for special events. (For instance, DARTS used the fund to help pay a home health aide to sit with a stroke survivor so his wife could attend their granddaughter's play.) If you want more information on county-funded programs or the DARTS respite fund, call your service coordinator or check with our information center, 651-455-1560.

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