



Winter 2002

# Keeping In Touch

## News For Family Caregivers

by Lynn Cibuzar, DARTS Service Coordinator

### Give Me a Break

We all know the fear of having a toddler wander off in a store and be out of sight. The same fear exists for caregivers of someone with dementia who may wander and become lost. The Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return Program addresses this concern by assisting in the identification and safe, timely return of individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. If a person registered in the program wanders, whomever finds him or her can call the Safe Return toll-free number located on the wanderer's identification wallet card, jewelry, or clothing labels. The Safe Return telephone operator immediately alerts the family members or caregiver listed in the program's database, so they can be reunited with their loved one. If a person is reported missing by a family member or caregiver, Safe Return can fax information and a photograph to local law enforcement agencies. Local Alzheimer's Association chapters provide family support and assistance while police conduct the search and rescue.

To register, one completes a simple form, supplies a photograph, and chooses the type of identification product the registrant will wear or carry. For more information, call the Alzheimer's Association help line at 1-800-232-0851.

### My Family Member Refuses Help? What Can I Do?

It can be frustrating when you know your family member is having difficulty, yet doesn't want any help. It may help you to try understanding why they resist help. Some possibilities are:

- Do they think that things are going well without help?
- Do they worry about having enough money to cover the costs of help?
- Do they fear having strangers in their house or having their privacy invaded?
- Do they think having help is like using "welfare"?
- Do they fear a loss of control and independence? Is pride a factor?
- Are the requirements for using a service – financial disclosure, application process, interview – too overwhelming?

The first step to overcoming these obstacles is to talk about your family member's feelings. They may feel fear, anger, grief, helplessness, and frustration. Tell them that you understand how difficult it is to experience these changes and that you will include them in any decisions being made.

Start small – try one new thing at a time and suggest a trial period. For example, try a bath bench for someone who is unsteady in the bathtub. Later, perhaps an occupational or physical therapist could come and do a safety assessment and recommend modifications.

Introducing ideas slowly increases the chance for acceptance. Telling someone that they don't have to keep doing something they don't like can also lessen resistance toward something new. Perhaps someone in the family can give a gift of service. Some people buy a DARTS ride card or set up a homemaker visit through DARTS for a family member who doesn't drive or who could use help with housecleaning.

One last tip is to try and use someone familiar to help when possible. Some people feel more comfortable with having a neighbor or friend mow their grass than having a stranger do it.

If you are still running up against resistance, try focusing on your needs rather than those of your relative. For example, say: "I would feel better if ..." "I would feel more comfortable when I'm not here if..." "Would you consider trying this for me so I will worry less?"

If you need help finding options for community services, give our DARTS Information and Assistance specialist a call at 651-455-1560. She's happy to talk to you about services and give some hints for approaching your family member.

## *may we help you?*

Where does a caregiver turn when they need some help caring for their loved one, but can't afford to hire help? One option is the Alternative Care Program – it's for people who want to stay in their homes and who meet certain income and asset limitations. The asset guidelines are fairly liberal: less than \$25,000 for a single person and less than \$49,000 for a couple (not including the home). The eligible person may be asked to pay a portion of the costs depending on their financial situation.

The program, administered by Dakota County, can pay for a variety of services for persons over 65 years who need some assistance to live at home. Such services and products include respite care, adult day care, home health care, Meals on Wheels, nursing visits, medical supplies, incontinence products, and homemaking/ chore services.

For more information about the Alternative Care Program, call Dakota County Public Health Nursing at 651-552-3115.

## *for your information*

*Upcoming caregiver education and support programs are:*

### Caring for an Aging Loved One series

(Presented by DARTS staff. Register up to 1 week before each session. Cost: \$10, one-time fee for materials)

- Augustana Lutheran Church,  
1400 S. Robert St., West St. Paul • Mondays, 2:00 – 4:00 PM
- Feb 4 The Caregiving Journey
  - Feb. 11 Understanding Memory Loss
  - Feb. 18 Frustration, Guilt... and Rewards
  - Feb. 25 Legal and Financial Issues
  - Mar. 4 Community Resources for Caregivers

### Education Programs

Register up to 1 week before a program date. A donation of \$10.00 per program, payable at the door, is requested to cover material costs.

Farmington Community Senior Center, 431 3rd Street, Farmington

#### **Advice on Eldercare Legal and Financial Issues**

(Presented by Stuart Schmitz, Elder Law Attorney)  
7:00 – 9:00 PM • Wednesday, January 30, 2002

#### **Caregiving as a Family: All for One and One for All**

(Presented by Lynn Cibuzar, DARTS) Bring your family along to hear ideas on how families can work together to manage caregiving challenges and share the rewards.  
7:00 – 9:00 PM • Wednesday, February 6, 2002

#### **Dealing with Depression** (Presented by Solveig Dittmann, Regina Medical Center)

Tuesdays, February 19 and 26, 2002  
2:00 - 4:00 PM

River Room at Regina Medical Center, 1175 Nininger Road, Hastings

Call DARTS, 651/455-1560, for more information about these education programs.

### **Welcome to our new service coordinator**

Karna Turnquist came to DARTS last June from a social work position at Abbott Northwestern Hospital. As a DARTS service coordinator, she is working with seniors to identify their needs and find the services – both at DARTS and elsewhere – that best meet their needs. Karna is pleased to be able to help seniors stay independent and in their homes. She is looking forward to facilitating her first “Caring for An Aging Loved One” series in West St. Paul in February.

### **DARTS offers “brown bag” caregiver sessions for employers**

Caregiver concerns don't stop at the office door. Recently, DARTS has presented several educational presentations to employees at area businesses during the lunch hour. “Brown bag” topics include The Sandwich Generation: A Hero or a Sub, Understanding Memory Loss, Critical Conversations: Making Decisions as a Family, and more. If your workplace could benefit from a program on caregiver issues, give Lynn Cibuzar or Janie O'Connor a call at 651-455-1560.

### **CaregiverMN.org**

Don't forget to visit our DARTS web site for family caregivers of seniors. The site -- [www.caregiverMN.org](http://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.

*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.*