

Caregivers Corner September 29 2009  
Diane Cameron

Former First lady Rosalyn Carter said this about caregiving:

“There are only four kinds of people in the world—those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers.”

We know that 65% of people who need caregivers rely on family, friends and neighbors for assistance. Most of these caregivers are women. A recent study by The National Caregiving Council estimates that 75% of caregivers are women. Who are they? The average caregiver is 46 years old, married with children and works outside the home.

The odds are good that you are or you know one of these women. You may be talking to your friends about the stress but what we often don't talk about –because we are caring for family—is that caregiving can also be a health hazard and career hazard for women.

Metropolitan Life has studied caregiving and its health and economic consequences for years. They described the career consequences of women who are caregivers as follows:

- 33% decreased their work hours
- 29% passed up a promotion or training
- 22% took a leave of absence
- 20% went from full time to part time
- 20% quit their jobs
- 13 % retired early

You can see the career consequences and easily calculate the economic impact on a caregiver's family. There are also health implications for the caregiving woman. Another study by Met Life, comparing caregivers to non-caregivers, showed that caregivers have a 28% higher incidence of hypertension, heart disease, and poorer immune function. We also know that caregivers very often put off their own medical check up's, tests and health screenings because they are focused on the health and medical needs of the loved ones they care for.

At Community Caregivers we see this daily. It is why we are dedicated to helping caregivers and their loved ones –of all ages. Over our many years of delivering these services we have come to see the direct correlation between the health and well-being of the family caregiver and the stability and health of the whole family. This is why we have committed more time and funds to developing and delivering programs to help caregivers maintain their health and more effectively care for their loved ones.

If you are a caregiver --and especially if you are the friend of someone who is an active caregiver --please join us for some of the upcoming fall workshops. This is a special way that you—as a friend –can help someone who is currently in the caregiving role—

remembering as Mrs. Carter tells us—we'll all get a turn in that role. Offer to register and bring your caregiving friend or neighbor to a workshop so that they can participate and receive support. What a great friend's outing that could be!

Here are some of the upcoming Community Caregivers workshops and presentations:

Wednesday October 21 10am to 12 NOON

**Exploring Spirituality to enhance the caregiving and care receiving journey.**

Spirituality as a resource for caregivers. Sharing an inner life of gratitude, joy and sorrow. Participants will enjoy a simple vegetarian lunch together. Presented by Ellen E. Howie, RN and spiritual director.

Wednesday October 28<sup>th</sup> 3 to 4:30 pm

**“My Friend has Dementia...Now What?”** How to nurture a relationship and adjust and enjoy activities when a loved one or friend has dementia. Presented by Erin Clark from the Alzheimer's Association.

Friday November 13<sup>th</sup> 11am The **Ins and Outs of Medication Management:**

How to manage medicines safely as well as tips for communicating with doctors and pharmacists. Presented by Beth Allison, MN, RN, FNP, Director of St. Luke's Hospital School of Nursing Center for Public Education and Beth van Bladel, Founder and Director of the Capital Region Patient Advocacy & Navigation Project.

These workshops will take place at the Community Caregivers Office at 2113 Western Avenue—in the building of the Foundation for New York State Nurses—across from the 20 Mall.

These workshops are offered at no charge.

Registration is required.

Please call the Community Caregivers office at 456-2898 to register or for more information.

Also please consider joining us for one of the upcoming Orientation/Information sessions to learn about how to become a volunteer.

These are:

Friday October 15<sup>th</sup> at 11am

Tuesday October 27<sup>th</sup> at 8am

Wednesday November 11<sup>th</sup> at 9am

Also at the Community Caregivers Offices.

In your role as a past, present or future caregiver remember to take care of yourself first so you will be able to better care for someone you love.

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