

## Caregivers Need Help Too

By Judy Rothstein

When Mimi Moriarty asked us why we were there, I was glad I wasn't the first person up. The truth was I was there as a "host" for Community Caregivers. The workshop was Poetry for Caregivers and Mimi Moriarty is a poet and a long-distance caregiver. The flyer for the workshop said poetry is a wonderful outlet for whatever kind of caregiving you are in - spouse, parent, sibling, child, friend, short-term, long-term.

So. She asked her question and when it was my turn, I said I wanted to be able to tell others about the value of writing. And then, before I knew what was happening, I became very emotional. I talked about my mom and my husband's mom and my two deceased, younger than I am, sisters.

I didn't know where all this was coming from because I'm not really a "caregiver." Except maybe for my husband. He took care of his mom for a number of years doing doctor visits and paper work and monitoring her condition and worrying and feeling guilty. Now he visits her almost daily in the nursing home. We're lucky to have her nearby.

This is all to say that caregivers need to take care of themselves and writing is one way. An outlet. And when you do it with others, as in a workshop, you see you're not alone. Eventually the writing will become a private act, but in the workshop there is some connection that happens. And it helped me.

Not surprisingly, many friends are "official" caregivers. They're in the same relationships the poster listed - the husband who needs caring for; the friend whose husband is failing; the friend who cared for her grandchildren; the sister who, out of 8 living siblings, cares for the mother. The list goes on.

In 2008, Community Caregivers offered 54 workshops for caregivers. Some were like the poetry workshop. Our own Executive Director is a writer, and she offers workshops on writing for caregivers. Some were for the body - massage and salsa. Some dealt with legal issues. Some dealt with Alzheimer's and dementia. In 2009 CC continues to provide workshops for caregivers.

A brochure from the New York State Office for the Aging, "Caregiver Tool Kit," lists some tips for caregivers. Here are the broad headings: Take a break; Find others like yourself; Recognize the warning signs of stress and depression; Get training; Accept offers to help you; and Educate yourself.

Many of CCs workshops address these topics. Call the office at 456-2898 for topics and dates and to register, or go to our website: [www.communitycaregivers.org](http://www.communitycaregivers.org).

There are times when the caregiver who provides help needs help too. Caregivers is working to be there for you.

Don't forget these upcoming events taking place at the Community Caregivers offices, 2113 Western Avenue, Guilderland. For more information call 456-2898 or email [info@communitycaregivers.org](mailto:info@communitycaregivers.org).

“Advanced Directives” A Legal Seminar covering living will, health care proxy, power of attorney law changes and other issues will be offered on Wednesday June 10th 2009 6:30-8pm

The next meeting of the Dementia Support Group will be on Thursday, June 18, 1pm