



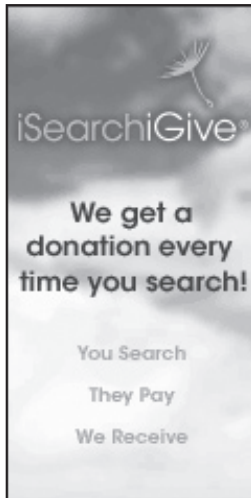
Community Caregivers

The Helping Hand

WINTER 2011

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Help older Albany County residents make a successful transition from hospital to home.

Become a Community Supports Navigator

– Volunteer training is provided –
Contact Chris Damon, Program Director, Community Caregivers at 456-2898 or visit

www.communitycaregivers.org

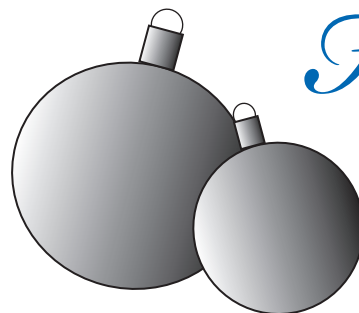
This program is supported in part by the Albany County Department for Aging, the New York State Office for the Aging, and the Administration on Aging.

17th Annual Gala a Big Success



Award winners at the Gala were (l to r) Pastor Charlie Muller and Albany District Attorney David Soares, each of whom received the Community Caregivers Public Service Award, and Charles Touhey, recipient of the Joseph A. Bosco Community Service Award.

Approximately 150 community members enjoyed the 17th Annual Community Caregivers Gala, held on November 19th at the Albany Country Club. The 2011 event was our most financially successful Gala ever. We raised more than \$40,000 thanks to the cooperative efforts of many folks who recognize the importance of “neighbors helping neighbors.” We owe a large measure of gratitude to our supporting advertisers, Honorary Committee members, generous friends and volunteers, the Community Caregivers Gala Committee, our faithful auctioneer, and numerous silent and live auction donors. We couldn't have done it without you. Finally, a very special thanks goes to our event sponsors in 2011 – Adirondack Environmental Services, Inc., Selkirk Cogen Partners, Christopher J. Cassidy and Wells Fargo Advisors, Times Union, PBR Graphics, Berkshire Bank, NBT Bank, Max E. Chmura, S2S Enterprises, St. Peter's Health Care Services, Norman and Micki Massry, Netrition Inc. and The Nigro Companies.



Happy Holidays

From the Executive Director

It was wonderful to see so many of our Community Caregivers volunteers, clients and supporting family members, corporate partners, past honorees, and guests at our 17th Annual Gala, held on November 19, 2011 at the Albany Country Club. A very special thanks to Bernadette Fuller and Joann Riley, co-chairs of the event, our staff event coordinator Jen Hill, and our great Gala Committee members. Photos of the event are now up on the website. Thank you for all of your support and a great evening!



Linda Miller, Community Caregivers Volunteer Coordinator, recently published a **News and Notes** internet bulletin specifically for volunteers. To be sure you get a copy of the next installment, you should email Linda at Linda@Communitycaregivers.org to be added to the distribution list.

In addition, we want to pay special tribute to our recent Volunteers of the Month. In September, Community Caregivers saluted Sally Lovering of Guilderland for her great work helping her neighbors over the past 7 plus years. In October, Petra Malitz was selected for this honor based on her outstanding efforts in the Community Caregivers office. Finally, Andy Tinning of Altamont, was our guest at the recent gala in recognition of his wonderful service to others throughout the years.

Community Caregivers recently expanded its hours of service to include one evening and one weekend day. If you know anyone that may now be able to volunteer for respite visits, shopping assistance, or telephone assurance calls, please call Chris Damon or Linda Miller at 456-2898.

Community Caregivers and the Alzheimer's Association are co-hosting a new Caregiver Information Series at the Guilderland Public Library through May 2012. Information on this important new series is on the back page of this newsletter.

I want to wish you and your loved ones a happy holiday season and thank you for your ongoing support.

Tom Tipple, Executive Director

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can caregiver stress affect my health?

- A: Although most caregivers are in good health, it is not uncommon for caregivers to have serious health problems. Research shows that caregivers:
- are more likely to have symptoms of depression or anxiety.
 - are more likely to have a long-term medical problem, such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes or arthritis
 - have higher levels of stress hormones
 - spend more days sick with an infectious disease
 - have a weaker immune response to the influenza or flu vaccine
 - have slower wound healing
 - have higher levels of obesity
 - may be at higher risk of mental decline, including problems with memory and paying attention

One research study found that elderly people who felt stressed while taking care of their disabled spouses were 63 percent more likely to die within 4 years than caregivers who were not feeling stress.

Part of the reason that caregivers often have health problems is that they are less likely to take good care of themselves. For instance, women caregivers, compared to women who are not caregivers, are less likely to:

- get needed medical care
- fill a prescription because of the cost
- get a mammogram

Also, caregivers report that, compared with the time before they became caregivers, they are less likely to:

- get enough sleep
- cook healthy meals
- get enough physical activity

Q: How can I tell if caregiving is putting too much stress on me?

- A: Caregiving may be putting too much stress on you if you have any of the following symptoms:

- feeling overwhelmed
- sleeping too much or too little
- gaining or losing a lot of weight
- feeling tired most of the time
- loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy
- becoming easily irritated or angered
- feeling constantly worried
- frequent headaches, pain or other physical problems
- abuse of alcohol or drugs, including prescription drugs

Talk to a mental health professional right away if your stress leads you to physically or emotionally harm the person you are caring for.

Tips for communicating with a person who has Dementia

We aren't born knowing how to communicate with a person with dementia—but we can learn. Improving your communication skills will help make caregiving less stressful and will likely improve the quality of your relationship with your loved one. Good communication skills will also enhance your ability to handle the difficult behavior you may encounter as you care for a person with a dementing illness.

1. Break down activities into a series of steps. This makes many tasks much more manageable. You can encourage your loved one to do what he can, gently remind him of steps he tends to forget, and assist with steps he's no longer able to accomplish on his own. Using visual cues, such as showing him with your hand where to place the dinner plate, can be very helpful.

2. When the going gets tough, distract and redirect. When your loved one becomes upset, try changing the subject or the environment. For example, ask him for help or suggest going for a walk. *It is important to connect with the person on a feeling level, before you redirect.* You might say, *"I see you're feeling sad—I'm sorry you're upset. Let's go get something to eat."*

3. Respond with affection and reassurance. People with dementia often feel confused, anxious and unsure of themselves. Further, they often get reality confused and may recall things that never really occurred. *Avoid trying to convince them they are wrong.* Stay focused on the feelings they are demonstrating (which are real) and respond with verbal and physical expressions of comfort, support and reassurance. Sometimes holding hands, touching, hugging and praise will get the person to respond when all else fails.

4. Remember the good old days. Remembering the past is often a soothing and affirming activity. Many people with dementia may not remember what happened 45 minutes ago, but they can clearly recall their lives 45 years earlier. Therefore, *avoid asking questions that rely on short-term memory*, such as asking the person what they had for lunch. Instead, try asking general questions about the person's distant past—this information is more likely to be retained.

5. Maintain your sense of humor. *Use humor whenever possible, though not at the person's expense.* People with dementia tend to retain their social skills and are usually delighted to laugh along with you.

A Convenient Way to Lend an Especially Helpful Hand

When asked about his work for Community Caregivers, Jerry Ostrander will say, "I'm sure I get more out of it than I give." But he gives a great deal because, every Thursday afternoon, two Caregivers clients can depend on him for their much-needed rides. First, he takes Anthony to visit his wife at the nursing home where she receives the care she needs. Next, Jerry gives Bron a ride home from his senior center activity program. Then he gives Anthony a ride back home.

Retired several years ago from a long career with the Price Chopper Corporation, Jerry serves on the Board of the Schenectady Mission as well as helping through Community Caregivers. He joined Caregivers in February, 2010, and has been driving Anthony and Bron for more than a year now. Jerry explains, "It works really well for me, because I can block out that period of time each week. Not only is it convenient for me, but these clients are now my friends; they're like extended family."

This arrangement is great for all concerned – the volunteer, the clients, and Caregivers staff. As Mary Morrison of Caregivers points out, "It's important and comforting for these clients to know that they have their rides from someone they know. And of course it saves time not to have to keep calling for volunteers to take care of them."

If you can lend a helping hand in this way, please give Mary a call. As Jerry says, "I've been blessed in my life. I appreciate being able to give back."

A GOOD READ

Gail Sheehy is the author of 15 books; her most recent one, *Passages in Caregiving* is the story of her journey as a caregiver for her husband. She also tells the stories of other caregivers, and identifies the eight stages of caregiving and how to navigate each one. Sheehy writes, "It was an uncharted journey. I wasn't expecting it. I was not prepared. And soon, I was lost."

Passages in Caregiving is an emotional book with important information and strategies for every caregiver.

New Information Series Free to the Public

Community Caregivers and the Alzheimer's Association are co-hosting an important new series being held at the Guilderland Library to help family, friends and caregivers gain valuable information about dementia, memory loss and Alzheimer's disease. These sessions are scheduled for January 5, February 2, March 1, April 5 and May 3, 2012. Topics include: an overview of the disease and its progression; communication barriers; tips or strategies for better communication; and managing difficult behaviors.

These sessions may prove especially helpful for volunteers of Community Caregivers who provide respite for caregivers struggling to care for someone with these issues. It also may provide insight to supporting a family member or friend who is dealing with Alzheimer's disease.

Additional information about the topics at each session may be found on the Community Caregivers website. To register for these sessions please call Jamie Mott at 518-867-4999 extension 209 or e mail Jamie.mott@alz.org.

Gifts for "hard-to-buy for" Older Adults

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalization for New Yorkers. More than one-third of adults 65 years and older fall each year in the United States. Help your loved one avoid slips, trips and falls by purchasing fall prevention items such as:

Night lights: place in hallways, bathrooms and bedrooms to keep pathways visible.

Carpet tape: to help keep area rugs firmly in place.

Non-slip tub mats: Most falls at home occur in the bathroom. Tub mats should stick securely to the tub floor and have good tread.

Shelf grabbers: Shelf grabbers are reach aids used to obtain items placed above the head without using a step stool, allowing you loved one to maintain his or her balance.

Shower chair: provides stability and safety either during a bath or shower. Assists the caregiver in helping their loved one in and out of the bath.

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Community Caregivers, Inc., 2021 Western Ave., Suite 104
Albany, NY 12203

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