

## Caregivers Connection

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### Who Are We Anyway?

*An octogenarian who cares for her middle-aged daughter with Down syndrome; a single woman who tends to the needs of both her elderly parents; a man who's concerned because his wife no longer takes care of herself or her home the way she used to; a woman who deals with a mentally ill adult son as well as her ex-husband with physical problems; a woman whose husband has health issues due to his military service, and several women who handle all the issues of their homes and lives because their husbands have some degree of dementia or Alzheimer's—what do these people have in common? First—the obvious—caregiving, and next: STRESS—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.*

Caregiving takes its toll physically as the health of those who attend to others often breaks down. Diabetes, hypertension, and back strain are just a few examples of what may result or be exacerbated. For instance, often a caregiver doesn't get proper rest because a loved one wanders. Or, he or she develops orthopedic issues because of having to lift or move a loved one. Extra laundry, because of incontinence, or plain and simply, having “to pick up the pieces” of a loved one's behavior lead to exhaustion.

Worry and anxiety tax a caregiver mentally. Financial issues surface as the need for outside help increases. Decisions, for example, about placing the loved one in a home when care needs multiply, places an added strain.

Emotionally, a caregiver often lives a life of frustration that leads to impatience, resentment, and even anger—feelings that lead to that old devil, *guilt*. Forgiving oneself isn't always easy. Enter depression.

Seeking information, education, and possibly even respite and support leads an eclectic mix of caregivers to events provided in Ozaukee County by the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), non-profit organizations, and other caregivers.

In fall and late winter, the ADRC provides a seven-week class called “Powerful Tools for Caregivers.” These meetings guide those who attend with information, but more importantly, they aid and encourage the attendees to *take care of themselves (you can’t take care of others if you don’t first take care of yourself)*. For dates and details, contact the ADRC at (262) 284-8120 or (262) 238-8120.

The ADRC, along with the Caregivers Coalition of Ozaukee County, the Alzheimer’s Association, and Luther Manor Day Care, offer sessions on different topics such as financial issues, types of in-home and outside-the-home helps to address care needs, and how to deal with the emotional aspects of caring for someone.

This Journey Series is ongoing through the year. The next event will be Thursday, April 24 at the Family Enrichment Center, 885 Badger Circle, Grafton from 2:30-4:30 p.m. Topic for discussion will be **Tax Consideration for Caregivers**. On May 15, from 6:00-8:00 p.m., the emphasis will be on **Legal Considerations for Caregivers**. Call the above numbers at the ADRC for information or to receive a calendar for the Journey series.

Caregivers meet at four different locations at four different times each month for coffee and conversation. These casual gatherings give caregivers a chance to vent and receive support from others who understand what they’re experiencing. In May the Caregiver Coffees will meet at the following times:

**May 6, 2014 (first Tuesday of each month) 6:00-7:30 p.m.,** at The Providence Place, 815 Washington Avenue (Hwy. 60), Grafton;

**May 13, 2014 (second Tuesday of each month) 10-11:30 a.m.,** at Heritage Nursing and Rehabilitation, 1119 N. Wisconsin St., Port Washington;

**May 24, 2014 (fourth Saturday of each month), 9:30-11:00 a.m.,** Meadowmere Northshore, 10803 N. Port Washington Rd., Mequon. RSVP to Julie Irvine at 414 333-1168 or [jirvine@marykay.com](mailto:jirvine@marykay.com);

**May 28, 2014 (fourth Wednesday of each month) 10-11:30 a.m., at St. John Lutheran Church in Grafton, 1193 Lakefield Rd., Grafton (corner of Port Washington and Lakefield Rd.).**

St. John Day Care and Heritage Nursing and Rehab provide services for loved ones while the caregivers attend a coffee. For more information about any of the Caregiver Coffees, contact Barbara Lindholm at (262) 376-4328 or [blindywb2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:blindywb2@sbcglobal.net) or Julie Irvine.

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