

# Balance

2009 Spring Issue

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Serving people of all faiths.

## Good Company

It may come in the middle of the night or when we first arise to face the enormous tasks of the day—that penetrating sense of being alone faced by so many caregivers. No pep talk, no antidepressant pills, no doughnut or sweet roll can take the feeling away. It comes whenever we realize that we have inherited or accepted the main responsibility for the care of our loved ones. No one can possibly understand how heavy that responsibility is or how alone we feel carrying it.

With a slight change in outlook (and in wording), however, we can go from feeling “alone” to feeling “at one” with ourselves... and with God.

Then, we will always be in good company.

“This I know, that God is for me”

Psalm 156, v.9

(From *Comfort and Be Comforted*, Pat Samples, ACTA Publications, Chicago. Reprinted with permission.)

“My whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted until I discovered that interruptions were my work..”

Anonymous

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## WE'RE ON THE WEB

[www.catholiccharitiesswo.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesswo.org)

On March 1, 2009, on the Catholic Charities SouthWestern Ohio website, [www.catholiccharitiesswo.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesswo.org) CAN launched the “Caring Matters” caregiver **E-CAREline** and information website. It is designed to focus on the ongoing needs and issues facing family caregivers and caregiver professionals. Please view the website when you have a moment, and tell a family caregiver about the site. Please feel free to email us with your questions, thoughts or concerns. Once on the website, click on “Contact Us” in order to submit a question.



## Money - Saving Tips for Family Caregivers



The National Alliance for Caregiving tells us that the average family caregiver spends \$5,534 per year out-of-pocket for caregiver expenses. (See [www.caring.com](http://www.caring.com)). Many of these expenses are medical and medication costs. Here are a few practical suggestions offered by the National Family Caregivers Association.

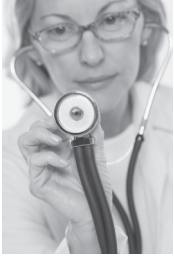
### Medical Costs

- Make sure you take the time to care for yourself—get a physical, a flu shot, your annual dental checkup, etc. While you may feel that you don’t have the time or money for these things, it will cost you much more time and money if you get sick or experience a dental emergency. A little preventive medicine can save you money in the end.
- If you are paying a physician or hospital bill out of pocket, don’t hesitate to negotiate the bill or to ask for a payment plan. Remember, the insurance companies don’t pay the full amount billed.
- Check all medical bills carefully for errors. If you find a discrepancy on a bill or you don’t understand a particular charge, bring it to the attention of the appropriate party immediately.

### Medication Cost

- Investigate prescription assistance programs to see if you and/or your loved one might qualify for reduced cost or free medications. There are numerous programs available to help qualifying patients get the medicines they need free or nearly free. Go to Web sites such as the Partnership for Prescription Assistance at [www.pparx.org](http://www.pparx.org) to get started. Bring your insurer’s formulary to the doctor’s office and talk to the doctor about switching your loved one to a generic version of the drug being prescribed, or a lower- cost alternative to the brand-name version. You can obtain the list from your prescription drug coverage provider.
- Ask your loved one’s doctor for drug samples, especially if he or she is recommending a new drug.
- Compare the prices of 90-day supplies and 30-day supplies and talk with your loved one’s doctor about writing the prescription for the more cost-effective quantity.

(A portion of this article was used with permission of the National Family Caregivers Association, Take Care, Winter 2009.)



## *Why Doctors Make Mistakes*

Jerome Groopman, MD, author of *How Doctors Think*, offers three simple questions to ask your doctor when he or she is making a diagnosis.

1. "What else could it be?"
2. "Could two things be going on to explain my symptoms?"
3. "Is there anything in my history, physical examination, laboratory findings, or other tests that seems not to fit with your working diagnosis?"

In some instances, these questions may cause the doctor to go back and re-examine assumptions, to think again, and to come up with a different, and now correct, diagnosis. All doctors want the best treatment for their patients, and the best treatment involves the most open-minded thinking.

(These questions appeared in "Why Doctors Make Mistakes" in the AARP Sept/Oct. 2008 Magazine)

If interested in obtaining a copy of this article please call the CAREline at (513) 929-4483.

## *The Internet: A Mixed Blessing for Unwary Health Consumers*

Thanks to the Internet, access to medical information is easier and faster than ever. However, all that information can lead to overload, or worse. An unwary health consumer could end up getting inaccurate, misleading or just plain bad advice. Someone trying to find a "deal" on prescription medications by ordering from an online company could purchase medication that may not be safe.

Reputable medical Web sites can help health consumers:

- Decide when they need to see a doctor
- Select the right physician
- Evaluate the treatment they receive
- Ask informed questions about a procedure or surgery

(Article from Ohio Department of Aging, *Aging Connection*, February 2009, used with permission.)

## *Elders Fear Loss of Independence More than Death*

A new research study, "Aging in Place in America", examines the attitudes and anxieties of the nation's elderly population. The children of seniors also fear for their parents, with particular concern about their emotional and physical well-being should they have to enter a nursing home.

The vast majority of seniors (89 percent) want to age in place - or grow older without having to move from their homes - and more than half (53 percent) are concerned about their ability to do so.

A large majority (82 percent) of baby boomers fears their parents will be mistreated in a nursing home and 89 percent fear they will be sad.

"These findings tell us that, above all else, older Americans value their ability to live independently," said Peter Bell, president of National Aging in Place Council. "As a society, we must find ways to help our parents and grandparents live their latter years at home. We must make aging in place a national priority and a reality for older Americans."

(The portion of the research study quoted above appeared in *Elder Care/Work Balance*, a newsletter from bringing Elder Care Home LLC. To access the full report of the study, visit [www.clarityproducts.com/research](http://www.clarityproducts.com/research))

## *How May I Help My Loved One to Remain Independent?*

It's been said that many persons confined to a nursing home are there not because their condition deteriorated, and they could not live at home, but because their caregiver "gave out".

A few suggestions available to caregivers through the Caregiver Assistance Network:

- 27 Family Caregiver support groups are free and available to you. Support groups focus on a myriad of needs and topics. These include caregiver support, living with acute and chronic diseases, grief and loss, self-help, mental health, parenting and many more. Yet, all groups have one thing in common; they address the emotional, physical and often spiritual aspects of a disease process or life experience and members uphold each other through a common bond. Call (513) 929-4483 for details.
- Free practical talks on caregiver concerns are being offered throughout the Tri-state every month through the Network's Professional Speakers Bureau. Many of these talks focus on how you can care for yourself while you provide support for your loved one. Call (513) 929-4483 or view our website for a schedule of talks or to arrange a talk for your church or organization. A current very popular series is "Tools for Caregivers".

Take advantage of these opportunities so that you are better able to assist the person you love to remain independent as long as possible.

# CAREGIVER NEWS

Margaret Iannaci has been appointed Coordinator of the Caregiver Assistance Network. In this position she succeeds Gene McClory, who has requested a reduction in his hours, and now serves as Assistant Coordinator.

Over the years the Advisory Council of CAN has provided countless suggestions and ideas for CAN's development. Three Council members who have contributed significantly to the Caregiver Assistance Network's growth are retiring from the Council:

Sherry Gibbemeyer, R.N., Drake Center, a member since CAN was established in 1996.

Sister Roslyn Hafertepe, S.C., Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati.

Rev. Kathryn B. Westmorland, Pastor, St. John's Westminster Union Church

CAN is deeply grateful to these Council Members for their generous service to the Caregiver Assistance Network and to Catholic Charities SouthWestern Ohio. THANK YOU!

## Articles of Interest

CAN is pleased to share with you at no charge one or more of these articles that have recently crossed our desk. Call the CAREline at (513) 929-4483 to receive a copy.

- "Nutrition Ideas for Stress Reduction"
- "Communicating Effectively with a person who has Alzheimer's"
- "Alzheimer's: Variety of long-term care options available"
- "Diagnosing Alzheimer's: An interview with a Mayo Clinic Specialist"
- "Shifting into Reverse" (The do's and don'ts of a reverse mortgage)
- "Assessment of Elderly Abuse"
- "Your Brain - Use It or Risk Losing It As You Age"
- "Vision Loss" (Symptoms, Warning Signs, Home Alterations, etc.)

## DID YOU KNOW?

A Caregiver Conference sponsored by the Southwest Ohio Caregiver Coalition (SOCC) will be presented at the Manor House in Mason on October 14th and 15th. Details will follow.

Hamilton County has launched a discount card program to assist county residents to cope with the price of prescription drugs. For details, call 946-1010 or visit [www.HamiltonCountyRX.com](http://www.HamiltonCountyRX.com)

A new Drug and Poison Center number is available to reach specially trained nurses, pharmacists and doctors for advice and assistance on poison exposure problems. The new number is (513) 636-5111 or 1-800-222-1222, outside the Cincinnati Bell area.

The National Center on Caregiving at Family Caregiver Alliance has launched the Family Care Navigator, a first-of-its-kind comprehensive online guide intended to help families in all 50 states and the District of Columbia locate government, nonprofit, and private caregiver support programs. The resource is at: [http://caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/fcn\\_content\\_node.jsp?nodeid=2083](http://caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/fcn_content_node.jsp?nodeid=2083)

## Your Own Attitude toward Aging Matters

From a community-based survey of 660 people over age 50, researchers from Yale University found that those with positive attitudes toward aging lived 7.5 years longer than those with less positive attitudes. The findings held up even when the participants' health status was taken into account. The other factor that played a role was the will to live.

# Resources

## IN PRINT

Medicine, Religion and Health: When Science and Spirituality Meet, Harold G. Koenig, MD, Templeton Foundation Press, 2008



## ON THE WEB

"Prepare to Care: A Planning Guide for Families" from the AARPP Foundation. Download your copy at [www.aarp.org/foundation/prepare\\_to\\_care](http://www.aarp.org/foundation/prepare_to_care)

The satisfaction ratings and other information about nursing homes in Ohio are available on the Ohio Long-term Care Consumer Guide at [www.Ltcoho.org](http://www.Ltcoho.org)

A new website from the United Health Fund on coordinating care during transition. A guide and checklists are available at [www.nextstepincare.org](http://www.nextstepincare.org)

Metlife Mature Market Institute's new "Since You Care" guides may be downloaded at [www.maturemarketinstitute.com](http://www.maturemarketinstitute.com) under "What's New".



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*The Caregiver Assistance Network is a program of Catholic Charities SouthWestern Ohio and funded in part by the Ohio Department of Aging through the Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio.*

*CAN VOLUNTEER RECEIVES  
OUTSTANDING SENIOR  
CITIZEN AWARD  
"NEED HELP? CALL PAT"*

Pat Chaney, a retired nurse and member of St. Aloysius Gonzaga Parish, was singled out by the Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio as the recipient of the 2009 Outstanding Senior Citizen Award presented on March 17. Her volunteer service to her community, to her parish, and to the Caregiver Assistance Network over the years takes many forms: recruiting the services of other retired nurses to assist seniors with transportation and blood pressure checks, setting up informational programs to assist family caregivers, conducting a monthly family caregiver support group. As one of Pat's colleagues told us: "If a senior or caregiver in our community needs help, just call Pat".

The Caregiver Assistance Network offers its congratulations and appreciation to Pat Chaney for her very generous ongoing volunteer support to seniors and family caregivers.

*"WE ARE IN THIS  
TOGETHER"*



We passed another major milestone at the Agency. February 14th marked our 95th Anniversary. As I look back on all that has happened to the Agency and to our communities during those 95 years, I realize that there is one virtue that has sustained us during the good times and the bad. That is the virtue of hope. Often we confuse hope with optimism. Optimism sees the world through rose colored glasses. Hope sees the world as it is and still holds to the conviction that God remains present to his people.

A fundamental question for all of us is: What is God asking of me in this time of crisis? We all need the assurance that we are in this together. This is not the time to place limits on our compassion. It is, however, a time for deeper reflection, prayer, community building, and innovation. More than ever we are called to open our hearts and minds to those in need. We must remember that we have something of value to offer to those who come to us. The rebuilding of America must happen in the towns, cities and rural communities across the nation. The poor must not be left out of the various bailouts and stimulus package. People of faith have much to contribute.

Kathleen Donnellan  
Executive Director  
Catholic Charities SouthWestern Ohio