



THIRD THURSDAYS: TIME FOR CAREGIVERS

Unpaid family caregivers throughout Lewis, Mason, and Thurston counties are invited to attend **Third Thursdays: Time for Caregivers**. Rotating through the three counties, these events on the third Thursday of every month will focus on discussions regarding the resources, supportive services, and ideas that can help you maintain your own mental, emotional, and physical health so you can continue to provide care to your loved one.

If you are caring for your aging father who has injured himself and needs your help, your wife who develops Alzheimer's disease, or Aunt Tilly who has become bed ridden—you are an unpaid family caregiver. The care you provide may range from modest tasks to heavy-duty, round-the-clock assistance. You may live in the same house, in a nearby town, or even in another state.

Beginning Thursday, February 19, 2009, in Olympia, these monthly events will have both afternoon and evening sessions to accommodate different schedules. The first one and a half hours of every **Third Thursdays: Time for Caregivers** session provides an "Introduction to Family Caregiving" focused on the basics of family caregiving: Am I a family caregiver? What can I expect as a family caregiver? What resources are available? Why is it such an emotional process? Why is there so much stress and what can I do about it? The second hour and a half of each session will feature a guest speaker discussing various topics of interest to family caregivers, including, but not limited to: Setting Limits, Planning for Change, Family Caregiver Experiences, and Navigating the Medical System.

Subsequent monthly events are currently scheduled on March 19 in Chehalis, April 16 in Olympia, May 21 in Shelton, and will continue to rotate throughout the service area of the Lewis-Mason-Thurston Area Agency on Aging as part of the Family Caregiver Support Program.

For More Information: See the Flyer Insert in this Newsletter or Contact

John Rodgers

Phone: 360-664-3162 ext 106 or 866-714-0479

E-Mail: RodgeJH@dshs.wa.gov

RESPITE CARE: A BREAK FOR YOU

- ⇒ **Would you like help in maintaining your own mental, emotional, and physical health so you can better care for your loved one?**
- ⇒ **Do you need time for yourself so you can recharge your batteries?**
- ⇒ **Would you like to go shopping, visit friends, sit on a park bench, or just rest without having to worry about the loved one you are caring for?**

If so, you may want to consider using Respite Care services within the Family Caregiver Support Program. This supportive service is designed to give an unpaid family caregiver time away from their caregiving duties while providing a trained and prescreened home care aide to supervise and perform personal care tasks for your loved one for up to 32 hours per month. The presence of a paid caregiver in the home also brings an additional social contact for your loved one.

The most common use of the Respite Care time allocation is two half-days a week in your home. However, the 32 hours per month can be used in a variety of ways. For example, the allocated time can be used in a single 8-hour block each week or it can be used to occasionally provide care for several days at a time either in your home or in a local care facility.

While the monthly cost of providing these Respite Care services is covered by the Lewis-Mason-Thurston Area Agency on Aging, some families may be required to share a prorated portion of the cost. This determination is based on the income of the care recipient — not the family caregiver. In the case of a married couple, one half of the joint monthly income is used to determine any possible cost share.

Your use of Respite Care services can be an important tool in maintaining your health and strength as a family caregiver. If you would like more information about this supportive service, please contact John Rodgers by phone (360-664-3162 ext 106 or 866-714-0479) or e-mail (RodgeJH@dshs.wa.gov). We are here to serve you.

OTHER SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS

Counseling Services: You can be connected to a professional counselor who specializes in caregiver issues if you are an unpaid family caregiver who does not have other access to counseling services. Up to six one-hour sessions may be available at no cost to you.

Housework & Errands: If you are an unpaid family caregiver, you may be eligible for help with essential household tasks so you can focus on other caregiver duties. Up to 16 hours per month may be available from a trained and screened home care aide at no cost to you.

Senior Companion Program: If your loved one in Thurston County might benefit from a weekly visitor who is selected from among this group of trained senior volunteers based on mutual interests and compatible personalities, contact John Rodgers at 360-664-3162 ext 106 or Karen Keough at 888-532-9542.

DEMENTIA: THE AGONY OF NOT BEING RECOGNIZED

A common complication in caring for someone who suffers from dementia, whether based on Alzheimer's disease or another cause, is the weakening of recent memories and the tendency for them to shift to a past time reality that seems more real to them at that moment than the present reality confronting the family caregiver.

This can cause those who suffer from dementia to not recognize their loved ones — even the spouse or child they have known all their adult life. For a wife who suffers from dementia, there may be times when she does not see the 80 year-old man sitting next to her on the couch as her husband — even though she has been married to him for the past 60 years. This can be painful and agonizing for the loving caregiver. **How can you deal with this problem?**

Vicki de Klerk-Rubin, in her book Validation Techniques for Dementia Care: The Family Guide to Improving Communications, provides some suggestions. The following is based on one of her examples (pp. 85-88). When your loved one does not recognize you, it can feel like your identity has been lost. But, you are still you and on some level, your loved one still recognizes you. Realize that your loved one may be frightened and panicked by this lack of recognition and that they will need time to work through the panic they feel.

You can help your loved one by remaining calm and engaging them in gentle conversation. Finding what the author calls the “connecting path” is difficult and does not go through logic or reason. She offers a three-step validation approach you might use if you find yourself dealing with this problem.

STEP ONE: *Allow your understanding of the problem to help alleviate some of the pain of non-recognition. Train yourself to breathe, relax, and think about what could be going on in your loved one to create their current reaction. Focus on their feelings and needs.*

STEP TWO: *Observe your loved one carefully. If you can pick up physical cues telling you they are in a “no recognition” state, you will be less surprised by their reaction.*

STEP THREE: *Explore what is going on in your loved one's world by asking questions. Be respectful of, and engaged in, their emotions.*

Such a conversation might sound like this:

- ◆ *Wife- Who are you? Husband- Who are you expecting?*
- ◆ *W- My Husband. H- What does he look like?*
- ◆ *W- He is tall with dark hair and brown eyes. H- What do you like about him?*
- ◆ *W- He cares for me. He is there for me. H- Would you feel lost if he wasn't there?*
- ◆ *W- Yes, I would. H- (gently touching her cheek) I am here.*
- ◆ *W- So you are. How about a cup of tea?*

Our loved ones are not normal one day and then the next day in a permanent state of dementia. They cycle in and out of different states of cognitive impairment. Finding ways to take advantage of the good times and bringing them back from the troubled times when you are able will improve life for both you and your loved one. A few copies of this book are available in the Family Caregiver Support Program lending library.



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newsletter, go to
www.LMTAAA.org



IT'S YOUR TURN

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

- **Do** you have ideas for topics of interest for guest speakers at **Third Thursdays: Time for Caregivers**, our new monthly event for unpaid family caregivers?
- **Do** you have ideas about how we might better serve unpaid family caregivers? Are there things we are doing well? Are there things we could do better?
- **Would** you like us to make a Family Caregiver Support Program presentation to your group? Would you like us to attend a community event?

Tell us what you think.

The best way to provide answers to any of these questions is to e-mail John Rodgers at RodgeJH@dshs.wa.gov. You can also contact me by phone at 360-664-3162 ext 106 or toll free at 866-714-0479.

SAVE THE DATE

THURSDAY, MAY 28, 2009 IN OLYMPIA

ALZHEIMER'S CONFERENCE: CARING PULLS US THROUGH