

# The Thurston-Mason Senior News

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## “Heard it from a Caregiver”

We are privileged to work with caregivers who care for family members and are often experiencing the most challenging times in their lives. They show a depth of ingenuity and insight in their caregiving challenges. The following are examples of some of their stories.

As one experienced caregiver explained, she used the “caregiving with the friends and family plan.” She described how she relied on friends and family members to care for her husband at home. As her Mother said ‘real friends are those who treat you well’. It took our caregiver decades to understand what her Mother meant.

She continued, “When I was young I had friends and made them easily. I have been fortunate to gather a small group of friends in my adulthood. I learned and confirmed they were true friends after becoming a care giver.” Real friends worth having, are people who can hear anything you say without trying to “fix it”. They just listen. They let you finish your thoughts, share your pain while you struggle to formulate questions and answers in your mind.



Equally important in a friend is someone in your life who is able to celebrate with you. They get it when you found a snack your Mother could eat during chemo or got the keys away from your Father who has dementia. No Judgment. Just share the moment of joy. Friends who treat you well get what is important to you, without reminding you of what is important for you.

Another caregiver offered her practical solution to her husband’s nighttime wandering. He is in the mid to late stages of dementia and often wanders around the house in the middle of the night. When she is up at night she finds him sitting in his chair in the dark living room. In the morning she sees signs that he has been rummaging around different rooms. One morning she found bruises on his arm and forehead. After seeing the doctor she contemplated how she can prevent him from falling while wandering around while she is asleep.

After a google search she was able to find motion detector night lights which she plugged into

outlets in their hallways. As he wanders in the house, the rooms, especially hazards at his feet, are illuminated. She also found a motion sensor which will turn on a table lamp and remain on until daylight.

Now as he moves around the house his steps light up like Michael Jackson’s Billie Jean video. So why does she not just leave the lights on in the first place? Well, she tried that as a remedy and found he would never go to bed or fall asleep if the lights were left on.

Lastly, during a recent caregiving workshop the group created a small poster to show friends who ask how it is going. It reads: “This is hard. Don’t fix this. ...Just Listen.” Call or email us if you want a copy sent to you – [FCSP@lmtaaa.org](mailto:FCSP@lmtaaa.org)

This article is a service of the Lewis Mason Thurston Area Agency on Aging. For more information about the Family Caregiver Support Program, call (360) 664-2168 and ask to speak with a Resource Manager or visit our website at [WWW.LMTAAA.ORG](http://WWW.LMTAAA.ORG)