

Training Empowers Caregivers

"The findings are stunning" reported Lauren Neergard, of the Associated Press. "Offering simple training to people struggling to care for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease not only eases their burden, it even can keep patients out of nursing homes for an extra 1.5 years."



More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease. It afflicts one in eight people 65 and older and nearly

one in two people over 85.

Those figures are cited repeatedly in the push for more research into better treatments. But a frightening parallel goes largely undiscussed: As Alzheimer's skyrockets, who will care for all these people?

And will the long-term stress of that care set up an entire population, once-healthy spouses and children, to suffer years of illness, even early death?

"I don't think society and policymakers have fully grasped the future magnitude of what we're up against, and how massive an operation we have to begin to deal with this," says Dr. Richard Suzman of the National Institute on Aging.

Dr. Mittelman of New York University tracked these families for up to 17 years. Custom-trained caregivers kept their loved ones out of a nursing home for an average of 1.5 years longer than their untrained counterparts. It didn't come at the spouse's expense as trained caregivers experienced less depression, and fewer physical health problems. The availability of ongoing tailored care is "a really crucial element," stresses Dr. Mittelman. "Without it, when the patient has a personality change and hits somebody for the first time in their life, you won't have anyone to turn to."

The National Institute of Health has tracked 640 dementia caregivers in five states



and their initial results agree with Dr. Mittelman, "Trained caregivers report improved quality of life, and feel they do a better job." Together, the research represents a major shift in scientists' approach to Alzheimer's caregiving -- from an emphasis on just *giving families a break through respite care, to the idea of empowering them to better handle the stress of the job.*

This type of caregiver training described above will now be offered by the **Caregiver Alliance**. The training will be offered in a group format (see article below) and when needed on a one-to-one basis.

New Alzheimer Training Group Forming

The group provides support and education about dementia and the Alzheimer's disease process. We will learn behavioral techniques called Habilitation therapy. We will problem solve how to manage challenges like bathing, eating, toileting and anxiety. Our goal is to make "smoother sailing" of your every day care. While we can not stop the stormy winds of dementia diseases, we can learn together how to better adjust our sails. This monthly group will start in September so please call the Family Care Advisor, **Leslie Ahern at 617-522-6700x376** to reserve your place.



Caregiver Day of R&R: Resources and Relaxation

Once again HESSCO Elder Services invites all caregivers for their Caregivers' Day of R&R on Wednesday, **September 17, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 PM** at the Holiday Inn, Dedham, MA. This is always a wonderful day for caregivers so **save the date.**

Formal and informal caregivers of all ages - family, professional, volunteer are invited to attend. The program will offer sessions on topics such as methods to handle stress, what it means to join a clinical trial, fitness for caregivers, and staying positive as a caregiver. The relaxation room will offer attendees the opportunity to experience mini-massages, Reiki, aromatherapy, art therapy, and much more. Caregivers can also learn about resources available to them at the exhibitors' fair that will go on throughout the day. Then there will be a lovely sit down lunch. Call **781-784-4944** to register for Caregivers Day. The cost is \$10.00 per person and that includes a great lunch.

I am really excited about this year's conference as I will be giving my workshop on laughter that morning which is described below.

Manage Your Stress with Laughter



Learn how to laugh even when you don't feel like laughing. That is of course, when you need it most. Hearty laughter can lift the hearts of caregivers by reducing the

stress from everyday demands. Caregivers will learn laughter exercises to recharge themselves physically and emotionally. Caregivers will leave with their plan to integrate more laughter and joy in to their lives and strengthen their resiliency. The above picture shows senior response officer of West Roxbury, Tom Boyle and caregiver, Wendy at our last laughter workshop enjoying their laughter exercises together.

Care giving on Community TV

Age Wise Boston: Bridging Generations

The BNN Live cable show is on every second Tuesday of the month at 2:30 PM on Comcast channel 9 and RCN channel 15.



Taking Care

Family Care Advisor **Leslie Ahern** and her husband **Paul Antokolsky** who is an elder care specialist and SHINE counselor host their one-hour show "**Taking Care**" **Live every Wednesday at 6:00 PM** on Comcast channel 9 and RCN channel 15. The program is then repeated on Friday at 10:00 AM and Sunday at noon.

Caregiver Support Groups

Join other caregivers for refreshments and discussion in a caring, relaxed, and confidential setting on a monthly basis. Everyone is welcome and there is no charge. Refreshments are provided. If this is your first time coming to a group, **please contact the group leader first.**



LGBT* Caregiver Support Group

Monday, August 4, 2008 from 6:00 -7:30 PM at the Ethos' office in Jamaica Plain
Contact: **Joanne Peskowitz (617) 271-4182**
*Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender

Roslindale Evening Support Group

will meet Thursday, **August 21, 2008** at 6:00 PM at the Boston Rehabilitation Center in Roslindale. It is accessible to MBTA and there is free parking. Refreshments are provided. Contact: **Leslie Ahern 617-522-6700 x376**

Are you interested in participating in a Downtown Lunchtime Caregiver Support Group? If so, please contact Betsy Downton at **617-635-3979**



For more information, please contact:

Leslie Ahern

Family Care Advisor

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617-522-6700 x376