

The Candidates as



Caregivers

Where Does Your Candidate Stand On Caregiving Issues?

Massachusetts new presidential primary date is Tuesday February 5, 2008. January 16th is the deadline to register or change your party affiliation. Yes, I know you have hardly finished taking down the holiday lights and wreaths, but there are some critical issues in this election for family caregivers.

The staff at the AARP Bulletin interviewed most of the candidates and summarized their findings as follows. “The candidates’ experiences—from Mike Huckabee, who witnessed an extended period of private care nearly exhaust his parents’ savings, to Hillary Clinton, who moved her 88-year-old mother into her Washington home—reflect the complexity and the demands of caring for America’s aging population. Most of these families have confronted the growing challenge physically, emotionally and financially.”

“Unlike the average American, however, most of the candidates have not had to make decisions about caring for family members based primarily on finances—a fact not lost on Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware. His widowed mother, Jean, lives with him. Senator Biden said, “She’s 90 years old and I can afford it. But what about those folks who can’t afford private care, and their son or daughter has to leave a job?”

Do you know where your candidate stands on supporting caregivers? Here are some very specific questions you can ask them.

- Do you endorse programs that provide financial help for family caregivers who have had to leave their jobs to provide care for a loved one?
- Do you favor increasing community care for elders and the disabled over institutional care? How would you fund that care?
- Would you pass a Family Medical Leave bill that provides some payments for the caregiver?

Most of the candidates have position papers and/or a written policy that you can ask for from their campaigns. You can often find what you’re looking for by going to www.aarp.org.

New Year’s Resolutions That Caregivers Will Want To Keep

Most of us shrink from the idea of making New Year’s resolutions because it usually involves putting extra pressure on ourselves to try to do what we already know is hard for us. The focus is often on depriving ourselves of foods we enjoy, money or time we need.

Resolve instead to recognize that as a family caregiver you need to nurture and nourish yourself to stay in good emotional and physical health to carry on your demanding role as family caregiver. Some of these resolutions may be of a higher necessity while others you may have been successfully doing for yourself for years. You can prioritize the resolutions you select and do not make this another job for yourself. Expect you will only do some of them and at a pace that is reasonable and comforting to you. *(continued on back page)*

(New Year's Resolutions continued from front page)

In order to nourish and nurture myself, I will...

- Learn to take one hour out of each day just for myself to read, enjoy a hot bath, journal my thoughts or call a friend.
- Remind myself several times each day that “I am not in this alone”. There is always a Family Care Advisor assigned to my area with whom I can talk for support or ask about resources.
- Reach out to my family and friends to help with my loved one so that the weight of my responsibility can be lifted and shared. One way I can do this is to keep a list of needs handy so that when help is offered, I can be ready with an answer.
- Attend at least one caregiver support group a month to realize that I am not alone and that I can learn from others.
- See my doctor for a physical exam and give my own health needs more priority.
- Seek out one new resource to support my caregiver role such as chore services, housekeeping, home care programs or delivered meals.
- I will exercise at least 20 minutes three times a week for heart conditioning and stress reduction. Even if all I can do is walk around the house, up and down the stairs, put on same music and dance or exercise from a chair.
- Try to find a way to laugh or find humor each day even amidst any sadness or discouragement I may also feel. If I am having a day when I am feeling that I cannot do this on my own, then that is a signal that I should call a friend who always makes me laugh.

The toughest lesson caregivers have to learn is the most important people they have to take care of are themselves. Good luck and make you a great new year.

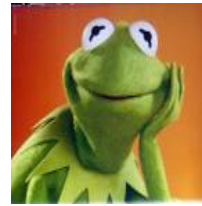
Caregiving on BNN Community TV

Age Wise Boston: Bridging Generations airs every second Tuesday of the month at **2:30 PM** and **Taking Care** with Ethos Family Care Advisor Leslie Ahern and her husband Paul Antokolsky airs every Wednesday at **6:00 PM** on Comcast channel 9 and RCN channel 15.



For more information, please contact:
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It's Not Easy Being Green, But You Can Help!



Ethos would like to start circulating our newsletters via email not only because it is fast, convenient and economical, but also because it helps preserve precious resources in the environment. If you would like to help us save trees, please send us your email address and contact info by emailing lahern@ethocare.org and put in the the subject line “Ethos Caregiver Mailing List.” It’s that easy and Kermit will thank you for being conscientious. Please be assured that your contact information will be kept confidential and will be used only to distribute our newsletter and inform you of any upcoming Ethos sponsored events.

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. **If this is your first time coming to a group, please contact the group leader first.**



LGBT* Caregiver Support Group

Monday, January 7, 2008 from 6:00 -7:30 PM
 At the Ethos’ office in Jamaica Plain
 Contact: **Joanne Peskowitz at 617-271-4182**
 * Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender

Roslindale Evening Support Group

Thursday, January 17, 2008 at 6:00 PM. We will be back in our beautifully remodeled room at the Boston Rehabilitation Center in Roslindale. It is accessible to MBTA and there is free parking. Refreshments are provided. Contact: **Leslie Ahern at 617-522-6700 x376**

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