

Sharing September Sunflowers

The sunflowers have been growing vigorously all summer long. Now when we look up and see them towering over the garden, it is a clear sign that the end of summer is near.

The painting of sunflowers pictured here was done by a man with mid-stage Alzheimer's disease who we will call Alan. The painting signaled a very important message to his family. At the age of 67, Alan was young to be so advanced in the disease. Routinely placed in the art class by the staff, Alan stared vacantly and remained in one position until assisted to move.



On one September day, the staff brought large beautiful sunflowers in to the class. He seemed mesmerized by them and then finally he picked up a brush and this painting was created. The staff was thrilled and immediately called his family. His two daughters came to visit and cried when they saw their dad and his painting. They told the staff that sunflowers were their mom's favorite flower. She had not visited as much recently as she found his decline so painful and felt perhaps the he didn't even know if she was present. His daughters had been visiting regularly, but often left after only a few minutes, unrecognized and shaken with despair. After viewing the art, the family re-evaluated a recent decision to discontinue visiting dad. The art confirmed that their dad was *still there* with many emotions trapped inside. His wife also began visiting as she could now see he did miss his "sunshine girl".

When words fail for a dementia sufferer, a work of art can tell a story, express an emotion, recreate a memory and serve as a vehicle of expression. Art allows for validation of feelings and a way to communicate with each other. Our "Smoother Sailing" Alzheimer Education group will be teaching activity therapy for caregivers and will start meeting on the first Monday of each month starting this fall. Call **Leslie Ahern at 617-477-6676 to find out more information.**

"Taking Care of Me" Support Group Starts in September

Learning to take good care of your self while caring for someone else is the best predictor of maintaining health and quality of life for both in the "care partnership".

In this kind of support group, the focus is definitely on the caregivers; because you are the critical link to successful at home care. This caregiver support group will also do what most support groups do: have time to share concerns, learn new resources and get

professional advising. This group will also provide techniques on stress management by learning relaxation, breathing and guided imagery exercises as well as the use of laughter and humor in our everyday lives. We will investigate journaling as a way to clarify and examine the many thoughts and feelings we are experiencing about our caregiving. We will look at improving organizational skills to help us manage the health care of both care receiver and giver. The group will be augmented by videos and some guest experts.



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Care giving is often a journey filled with changes and challenges with many ups and downs. The groups' goal is to maintain the caregiver's health and build a resiliency for responding to these challenges. As always, group members can also receive one to one counseling. The group will meet on the third Monday of the month beginning **September 15, 2008. You are asked to pre-register by calling Leslie Ahern at 617-477-6676.**

September Highlights for Caregivers

Caregivers' Day of R&R will again be held by HESSCO Elder Services. They are inviting all caregivers for their event on Wednesday, **September 17**, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 PM at the Holiday Inn, Dedham, MA. Call **781-784-4944** to register for Caregivers Day. The cost is \$10.00 per person and that includes a great lunch. Don't miss the "Manage Your Stress with Laughter Workshop" with Leslie Ahern and the "Rewards of Caregiving" with Sheryl Leary.

Building Caregiver Health and Resiliency will be presented by Leslie Ahern on **Saturday September 20, 2008** at the MS Society's one day conference on **The Hidden Symptoms of MS** at the Holiday Inn, in Mansfield, MA. The conference will also cover other issues related to MS such as fatigue, bladder issues and coping with emotions. The conference is free and open to people coping with MS, their family and friends. You must pre-register by calling Martha Maynard at **1-800-493-9255**.



The Caregiver Alliance of Suffolk County has a website that will keep you informed on all caregiver related information, support groups and activities. Visit www.caregiveralliance.org

Caregiving 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.

New 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**.

"Taking Care of Me" Support Group

The group will meet **Monday, September 15, 2008** at 6:00-7:30 PM at the Boston Rehabilitation Center in Roslindale. It is accessible to MBTA and there is free parking. Refreshments are provided. Contact: Leslie Ahern 617-477-6676. (See front for details)

Group meets every Third Monday.



"Smoother Sailing" Alzheimer Education Group

This free monthly group will start on **Monday, October 6, 2008** at 6:00-7:30 PM at the Boston Center in Roslindale. Call the Family Care Advisor, **Leslie Ahern at 617-477-6676** to pre-register. 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. We also will look at therapeutic activities to brighten everyone's day.

"While we can not stop the stormy winds of dementia diseases, we can learn together how to better adjust our sails". ©

Group Meets Every First Monday

LGBT* Caregiver Support Group

Monday, September 8, 2008 from 6:00 -7:30 PM at the Ethos' office in Jamaica Plain

Contact: **Joanne Peskowitz (617) 271-4182**

*Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender



For more information, please contact:

Leslie Ahern

Family Care Advisor

ETHOS, 555 Amory Street, Jamaica, Plain, MA 02130

617-477-6676

www.caregiveralliance.org