



# The Caregiver's Voice

## For People Caring for Family, Friends, & Neighbors

Volume 18, Issue 4

Fall 2024

The Caregiver's Voice is a quarterly publication of the AA County Department of Aging & Disabilities' National Family Caregiver Support Program. Contact us at: 410-222-4339/4375 or [caregiver\\_support@aaaccounty.org](mailto:caregiver_support@aaaccounty.org)

### Inside this issue

National Family Caregiver Month	2
Community Workshops	2
Ask Mary	3
Fall Support Group Dates, Times, and Other Information	3
Caregiver Support Facebook Group Link	3



## Fall Caregiver Workshops

### UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH DEMENTIA RELATED BEHAVIORS

*Mary Chaput, MA, CDP; Director, Family Caregiver Support Programs*

As an individual with dementia loses their ability to communicate with words, behavior becomes a powerful form of communication. Often, it is an individual's only way to communicate their needs, their feelings, and their pain. Sometimes these behaviors pose real challenges for the caregiver. This workshop will identify some common difficult behaviors and their triggers, as well as strategies to help decrease them.

October 23, 2024; 6:00 pm  
Severna Park Library  
45 West McKinsey Road,  
Severna Park, MD 21146

### CONNECTIONS, SUPPORTS, AND RESILIENCY

*Kim Burton, Behavioral Health Consultant and Educator*

We all know that caregiving is not for the faint of heart! Caregivers often live in a state of exhaustion and fear. Identifying and building our personal "protective factors" such as connections and supports can help boost the mental health and resiliency of those who care for others.

Join us for a morning of interactive learning. A continental breakfast will be provided.

Saturday, December 7, 2024  
Glen Burnie office  
7320 Ritchie Highway.

Pre-registration is requested for all in-person workshops so that we have adequate materials.

Register on-line at [www.aaaccounty.org/aging](http://www.aaaccounty.org/aging) or by calling 410-222-4375/4339.



This workshop is a high impact, dementia simulation experience that immerses participants into life with dementia, resulting in a deeper understanding of what it is like to live with cognitive impairment and sensory change. Space is limited at each session.

### Pre-registration by phone is required:

**410-222-4375/4339**

### DATE

Thursday, November 14th; 6:30 pm

*In-person sessions held at the Glen Burnie/Hein office location: 7320 Ritchie Highway. 410-222-4375/4339.*

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# November is National Family Caregiver Month (Amie Clark for AARP, July 2024)



Here's what I'd like to see:

- A big parade featuring caregivers on 5th Avenue in New York
- A huge rally in support of pro-caregiver legislation on the National Mall in Washington DC

Mall in Washington DC

- Restaurants across the country offering discounts to family caregivers
- Members of the NFL, NBA, MLB, and NHL wearing colored equipment that draws attention to caregivers

While none of this is likely to happen, having a month to draw attention to family caregivers is a good thing. It brings the facts about caregiving closer to the forefront of issues to be considered in 21st-century America. There have been gains made in the past decade in terms of government support for family caregivers



## Thank you!

Department of Aging and Disability staff thank each of you for your commitment to providing the best care possible to all of the care recipients in Anne Arundel County. Your dedication and hard work is truly an inspiration to all of us.

Take care of yourself and reach out to us when you have questions or need assistance.

For all of your caring and caregiving, thank you!  
Thank you!



## Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, New Years...

Whatever holidays you may be celebrating over the next several months, we wish you peace and happiness.

through the creation of national programs such as the Area Agencies on Aging, the Offices of Senior Resources, and the National Council on Aging.

Caregivers are vital members of society.

A good way to use this month is to consider the way in which you go about your caregiving and find new ways to make it less stressful:

- Learn to ask for and accept help
- Find ways to care for yourself in order to stay strong to care for your loved one
- Shift your thinking into new patterns of doing family celebrations that make room for the reality of your caregiving.
- Pat yourself on the back—or take yourself out to lunch, a movie, some kind of treat—as a way of saying thanks. You deserve it.

## Community Workshops

### NOW WHAT? CARING FOR THOSE WITH MEMORY LOSS

Arnold Senior Activity Center  
Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am  
Register: 410-222-1922



### UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH DEMENTIA RELATED BEHAVIORS

Arnold Senior Activity Center  
Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am  
Register: 410-222-1922

### DEMENTIA LIVE®

Brooklyn Park Library  
Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>; 2:00 pm  
Register: 410-222-6260

### ONE IS THE LONELIEST NUMBER – ESPECIALLY DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Maryland City Library – *Virtual*  
December 3<sup>rd</sup>; 6:00 pm  
Register: 410-222-1070

## Dear Mary...



Dear Mary,

I have been caring for my mother who has dementia for more than four years. She is generally easy-going; I am genuinely happy that I can have her with me and provide her care. I have attended several of the Department's caregiver workshops and try to follow your advice; I take care of myself and I think I've accepted what I do and do not have control over. Yet, for the past several months, I feel like I am in a fog. I have become somewhat forgetful, sometimes have difficulty making a decision, and find myself unable to pay attention during a television show or even a conversation. I spoke with my doctor and she called it "brain fog" and believes my symptoms are all stress related but I'm concerned that I am showing signs of dementia also. Is there really such a thing as "brain fog?"

Dear Reader,

Make no mistake about it—caregiving – even for someone who is easy going – is stressful. Finding resources, juggling schedules, managing finances... it is no wonder that you, and many other caregivers, are walking around in a kind of fog!

In 2019, Lawrence Wilson, M.D. wrote that brain fog is not recognized as a clinical diagnosis because it is not easy to test for it; rather, the diagnosis is quite subjective. An individual recognizes that his or her brain is not functioning as it has in the past; brain fog is not the same as dementia, depression, anxiety, or other mental conditions although its symptoms mirror those diagnoses.

Symptoms of brain fog include feeling hazy, spacey, forgetful and

absentminded; individuals might also have trouble processing information, have difficulty with paying attention and with word finding, and have trouble solving problems. Some patients describe it as "just not feeling myself." Symptoms can also worsen during the day, especially if you become overly tired.

Brain fog does not discriminate; it affects both men and women and can be caused by several disorders such as vitamin and mineral deficiencies, thyroid disease, menopause, blood pressure and infections (to name just a few). Brain fog can also be caused by stress and lack of sleep, certainly two variables shared by most caregivers.

If your physician found no underlying physical causes behind your "fog" and prescribed no medication or interventions, there are some things you can try to help alleviate the symptoms. Set realistic expectations and plan your day ahead of time. Limit multi-tasking; try working on and completing one task at a time.

Aim for 8-10 hours of sleep each night and take breaks throughout the day. Limit your caffeine, alcohol, and sugar intake. Exercise regularly and boost your brain power with brain fitness activities. Eat healthy meals and snacks; increase your exposure to sunlight and fresh air.

Make sure you maintain your social and support networks, even if it is still only by phone conversations.

And most of all, be gentle with yourself; caregiving for a loved one can be all-consuming. Remind yourself that you are doing a good job and reward yourself daily by making time to relax; listen to music, meditate, experiment with aromatherapy to determine what works best for you, and spend time doing the things you enjoy. And always remember to laugh!

Recently, many caregivers have told me that they found the "Ask Mary" column which formerly appeared in the local newspaper helpful so I thought we would re-create it in our quarterly newsletter. If you have a question and you think the answer would benefit other caregivers also, please share it via email (agchap01@aaccounty.org) or via USPS to Mary Chaput, Dept. of Aging and Disabilities, 7320 Ritchie Hwy., Glen Burnie, MD 21061.



## Family Caregiver Support Groups

**Glen Burnie Support Group**  
7320 Ritchie Hwy., 2nd Floor  
Facilitated by: Erin Oczkowski,  
LCSW-C

October 9th  
November 13th  
December 11th  
1:00-2:30 pm

**Annapolis Support Group**  
2664 Riva Road,  
Independence Room  
Facilitated by: Ashley Chookazian,  
LCSW-C

October 15th  
November 19th  
December 17th  
12:30-2:00pm (new time)

**Virtual Support Group**  
Facilitated by: Jennifer Sapp,  
MSW, MSG

October 21st  
November 18th  
December 16th

6:00-7:30pm

Zoom link:  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89199388396>  
Meeting ID: 932 8584 8158

or call  
301 715 8592  
Meeting ID: 932 8584 8158

## Community Caregiver Support Groups Booklet

[www.aaccounty.org/aging](http://www.aaccounty.org/aging)  
or call 410-222-4339



**Caregiver Support Facebook Group:**  
[Facebook.com/ArundelSeniors](https://www.facebook.com/ArundelSeniors)



## National Family Caregiver Support Program

7320 Ritchie Highway  
Glen Burnie, MD 21061

Phone: 410-222-4339/4375  
Email: [caregiver\\_support@aacounty.org](mailto:caregiver_support@aacounty.org)  
Web: [www.aacounty.org/aging](http://www.aacounty.org/aging)

**Anne Arundel County  
County Executive  
Stuart Pittman**  
Arundel Center  
44 Calvert Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Karrisa Kelly  
Director  
Department of Aging & Disabilities  
A Maryland Access Point Program**  
Heritage Office Complex  
2666 Riva Road, Suite 400  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
Phone: 410-222-4257  
Fax: 410-222-4360  
[www.aacounty.org/Aging](http://www.aacounty.org/Aging)

**Family Caregiver Support  
Program Staff  
Mary Chaput, Program Director  
Anne Kaiser, RCRP Coordinator**  
7320 Ritchie Highway  
Glen Burnie, MD 21061

- Information & Assistance (I&A)
- Adult Evaluation & Review Service (AERS)
- Adult Public Guardianship
- Americans with Disabilities Act Office (ADA)
- Assisted Living Facilities Program
- Evidence-Based Health Promotion
- Long-Term Care Ombudsman/Resident Advocate
- National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP)
- Respite Care Referral Program (RCRP)
- Senior Activity Centers
- Senior Care, Senior Center Plus
- Senior Nutrition Program
- Supports Planning
- State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)
- Telephone Reassurance Program
- Volunteer Programs

Anyone needing accommodations to caregiver events must contact Mary Chaput at 410-222-4339 or by e-mail at [agchap01@aacounty.org](mailto:agchap01@aacounty.org) at least seven days in advance of the event. TTY users, please call via Maryland Relay 7-1-1.

To join the NFCSP mail list and receive information regarding up-coming workshops and conferences, or to receive the *Caregivers' Voice* by email, call 410-222-4339 or email us at: [caregiver\\_support@aacounty.org](mailto:caregiver_support@aacounty.org)  
Back issues of the newsletter are available on the Family Caregivers' website at [www.aacounty.org/aging](http://www.aacounty.org/aging).

For information on sponsoring an edition of the *Caregivers' Voice*, contact Mary Chaput at 410-222-4339 or email [caregiver\\_support@aacounty.org](mailto:caregiver_support@aacounty.org).