



The Caregiver's Voice

For People Caring for Family, Friends, & Neighbors

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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

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Caregiver Support Facebook Group:

 [Facebook.com/ArundelSeniors](https://www.facebook.com/ArundelSeniors)

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Sneak Peak at Fall Caregiver Workshops

DEMENTIA 101 FOR CAREGIVERS: UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGES AND DEVELOPING COPING SKILLS

This workshop session will cover a basic understanding of dementia and how it affects the individual diagnosed and their caregivers. Communication tools and strategies for coping with changing behaviors will also be discussed.

UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH DEMENTIA RELATED BEHAVIORS

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.

CONNECTIONS, SUPPORTS, AND RESILIENCY

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 Saturday morning of interactive learning led by Kim Burton, Behavioral Health Consultant and Educator.

The Fall 2024 Caregiver Educational Workshop brochure listing dates, times, and locations will be available in August.



"Because it's frightening to care for someone you don't understand"

The Dementia Live 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. Two sessions of this workshop will be scheduled for the Fall 2024.

Space is limited at each session; dates and other important information will be included in the Fall 2024 Caregiver Educational Workshop brochure.

The Assisted Living Program (Ryan Shupp, Director, Assisted Living Program)



The Anne Arundel County Department of Aging & Disabilities is the only Area Agency on Aging in the State of Maryland that has an Assisted Living Program.

Our team of four (4) keep busy monitoring the smaller 4-16 bed assisted living facilities. There are over 110 facilities that we monitor every 6 months and our goal is to coach and assist the facilities in finding deficient activity prior to their official annual licensure survey through the Office of Healthcare Quality. We take a deep dive into the assisted living programs resident records, personnel files, medications, emergency disaster plan, and physical plant. Once our monitoring visit concludes, we do provide a Statement of Deficiency to the facility and expect them to send us a Plan of Correction in return for any deficient activity. In addition to our normal monitoring visits, we will also conduct complaint visits if needed.

Another major focus of the Assisted Living Program is managing the Senior Assisted Living Subsidy grant (SALS) for Anne Arundel County. This state-wide SALS grant subsidizes up to \$1000 for mid to low-income individuals residing in assisted living. We promote the grant within the community, maintain the waitlist, process the applications, complete eligibility verification, enroll the applicants, conduct quarterly subsidy interviews with all of our subsidy clients, as well as conduct an annual recertification. We highly promote individuals applying for the SALS grant whether they're over scaled financially, not currently residing in assisted living, or may not even qualify for the full \$1000. We have about a 2-year waitlist, so being proactive is key for anyone interested in receiving the SALS grant.

Our Assisted Living Program assists community members in navigating assisted living as it's a new territory for many people looking for a parent or loved one. Although we aren't

a referral agency, we have a good pulse on the facilities in Anne Arundel County and point community members in the right direction through the demographics they provide. If assisted living isn't the best option for someone, we do our best to provide alternative resources or funding opportunities whether that be the National Family Caregiver Support Program or the Medicaid Community Options Waiver.

As the ombudsman remains advocates for the residents, I like to think of us as advocates for the assisted living providers. There are a lot of challenges that can be faced when running an assisted living facility and we try our best to provide suggestions or support for those providers. One way we do that is by offering monthly training for the assisted living providers and staff. Our training is either required through regulation or oftentimes supplemental and is always free. We want to continually educate and reinforce best practices within the facilities. We also publish a monthly Assisted Living Program Newsletter that highlights different providers and resources that may be available to themselves or staff. Although we serve Anne Arundel County, our training opportunities and newsletter have been well received outside of Anne Arundel County!

Our program wants to assure the best quality assisted living facilities reside in Anne Arundel County and we always welcome new facilities by paying them a visit, giving them pointers, and encouraging them to sign up to become a subsidy provider, which means they can accept subsidy clients. There's a lot of work we do behind the scenes to hopefully translate to the frontline as community members seek a warm, caring home for their loved ones.

If you are in need of assistance or have questions in regards to the Assisted Living Program, feel free to reach out to us at 410-222-4336, we take a lot of pride in serving our community!

Stop Asking How Her Day Was (Jennifer FitzPatrick, MSW, LCSW-C, CSP (Speaker, consultant, author and founder of Jenerations Health Education, Inc.)



“How was your day, Mom?” “What did you have for lunch, Uncle Jim?” When a loved one with a dementia diagnosis resides in a nursing home or an assisted living community, caregivers often struggle during their visits. Well-meaning caregivers typically attempt to have a regular conversation with their older loved one, forgetting that this person no longer can reason or control impulses, and often will not even remember who the visitor is. This person with dementia also often misunderstands questions or is unable to articulate answers that make sense to the caregiver. Boredom and frustration result for both the caregiver and the person with dementia.

It's essential for caregivers to embrace new ways of socializing during a nursing home or assisted living visit. Some television is fine, particularly if it is a show or movie that is in the patient's long-term memory (think *Gone with the Wind* or *Lawrence of Arabia* for someone in their eighties or nineties). But to truly connect and engage the person with dementia, caregivers should embrace activity instead of conversation.

Many persons with advanced dementia, whether male or female, tend to most appreciate interaction and visits with others that are what I would call “dude-like.” While certainly not true of all boys and men, the vast majority of males in our society do not necessarily need to talk to each other to enjoy each other's company. A woman often doesn't get it when her husband goes to a baseball game with a buddy, and they never talk about that buddy's impending divorce. The two men simply enjoy watching the baseball game together, and that is the way her husband is there for his buddy. Extensive conversation is not always necessary, nor is it always welcome. When trying to connect with your older loved one who has dementia, try to think of two dudes hanging out—no matter the gender of either party.

SIX STRESS REDUCTION TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS FROM THE ALZHEIMER'S FOUNDATION OF AMERICA



Stress doesn't just affect your mood—it can have long-term health impacts as well if you don't take steps to manage it constructively. For individuals who face the stressful task of caring for a family member with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia-related illness, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) is offering six stress reduction tips for caregivers. "Family caregivers often find it challenging to make time for themselves, but being proactive about addressing caregiver stress and self-care is not selfish; it's essential and it benefits both the caregiver and the person for whom they are caring," said Jennifer Reeder, LCSW, AFA's Director of Educational and Social Services. "Failing to manage stress increases the risks of caregiver burnout, depression, and many other mental and physical health issues. Caregivers need to take care of themselves so they can provide the best possible care for their loved ones."

Family caregivers of people with Alzheimer's and related dementias are at greater risk for anxiety, depression, and poorer quality of life than caregivers of people with other conditions, and provide care for a longer duration of time, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). AFA offers these six stress reduction tips for family caregivers: **Be adaptable and positive.** Your attitude influences stress levels for both you and the person you're caring for. If you can "go with the flow," and avoid fighting the current, that

will help you both stay relaxed—conversely, becoming aggravated or agitated will increase the chances that your person will as well. Focus on how to adjust to the situation in a constructive way.

Deal with what you can control. Some things are totally out of your control. What is in your power to control is how you respond and react to these outside factors. Concentrating on finding solutions can help make the problem itself a little less stressful. **Set realistic goals and go slow.** Everything cannot be resolved at once, nor does it need to be. Don't hold yourself to unrealistic expectations. Prioritize, set practical goals, do your best to achieve them, and take things one day at a time.

Mind your health. Inadequate rest, poor diet, and lack of exercise can all exacerbate stress (and cause other health problems as well). As best you can, make it a priority to get sleep, eat right, drink plenty of water and find ways to be active. You cannot provide quality care to a loved one if you don't take care of yourself.

Clear and refresh your mind. Exercise, yoga, meditating, listening to music or even taking a few deep breaths can all help relax the mind and reduce stress. Find something that works for you and do it regularly!

Share your feelings. Disconnecting from your support structure and staying bottled-up increases stress. Whether it's with a loved one, trusted friend or a professional, don't be reluctant to talk about your stress, because that can actually help relieve it!

Stop Asking How Her Day Was (continued)

Often you are going to have the most satisfying experience with loved ones who have dementia when you do an activity with them rather than initiate a discussion. While persons with dementia may not be able to speak, they still might be able to sing. Music penetrates long-term memory, and many persons with dementia can sing along, tap their feet, or even dance to an old favorite tune. (Think the Temptations' "My Girl" or The Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always get What You Want" for patients in their sixties or seventies.)

Try some art activities. If your older loved one knitted before she was diagnosed, maybe she still can. She also may be able to paint, draw or garden. If your older loved one enjoys animals, bring your dog to her nursing home or assisted living and let her pet Rover. Go out for a walk and look at the fall foliage or enjoy the beautiful sunset together. Give Mom a manicure, massage her back or just hold her hand. Listen to talk radio. This can be a super activity for those older than 70 as listening to radio shows will be familiar in the long-term memory. Sometimes just sitting together without the pressure of having to come up with questions or discussion topics can be very relaxing for you both. It takes some getting used to, but eventually, you will be more comfortable with silence. Obviously there will be trial and error to see which activities your loved one responds to most favorably. But typically an activity or spending quiet time together is going to be more satisfying for both of you than asking her how her day was.



Family Caregiver Support Groups

Changes coming to the Caregiver Support Groups!

Beginning in September 2024, the Glen Burnie and Annapolis Support Groups will be in-person only. There will be a virtual support group meeting for those unable to attend in-person sessions. You are invited to attend any—or all—of the caregiver support groups!

Glen Burnie Support Group 7320 Ritchie Hwy., 2nd Floor July 10th

No August Meeting
September 11th

1:00-2:30 pm

JULY Zoom link:

<https://zoom.us/j/91500934491>

Meeting ID: 915 0093 4491

or call

301 715 8592

Meeting ID: 915 0093 4491

Annapolis Support Group 2664 Riva Road, Independence Room

July 16th

No August Meeting
September 17th

1:00-2:30 pm

JULY Zoom link:

<https://zoom.us/j/93285848158>

Meeting ID: 932 8584 8158

or call

301 715 8592

Meeting ID: 932 8584 8158

Virtual/On-line Support Group September 16th

6:00—7:30 pm

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89199388396>

Meeting ID: 891 9938 8396

Community Caregiver Support Groups Booklet

www.aacounty.org/aging
or call 410-222-4339



National Family Caregiver Support Program

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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 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
Back issues of the newsletter are available on the Family Caregivers' website at www.aacounty.org/aging.