



WHO CARES FOR

The Caregiver?

Where to turn when
an elderly loved one
depends on you

PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

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CARING FOR THE ELDERLY AND THE CAREGIVERS, TOO

Nonprofit provides support to families caring for elderly

Even a caregiver needs care. Being a caregiver for your elderly and ailing spouse or parent is a huge responsibility, requiring more work than a full-time job.

Citizens Who Care is a nonprofit organization that cares for the elderly and their caregivers in Yolo County. CWC began in 1975 as a Citizens Advisory Committee of the Mental Health Association of Yolo County with the mission of improving the quality of life for Yolo County's elderly and their caregivers.

CWC provides the frail and dependent elderly and their family caregivers with socialization and support to help sustain their quality of individual, family, and community life. The agency's programs help clients stay connected to their communities and, for those at home, remain as long as possible in their familiar and safe family environments. This is done by providing regular volunteer in-home visits and support, respite for family caregivers, and visitation in long-term care facilities. There are no fees for the in-home volunteer visits, whereas private in-home paid support costs on average \$25 per hour typically with a four-hour minimum.

In 2012, CWC provided support to 150 clients in Yolo County, primarily in Davis and Woodland.

"It takes a village to care for our community's elderly, that's why we are here," says CWC Executive Director Joanne Bell, explaining that taking care of the elderly should be a community effort.

Over 120 volunteers contributed more than 7,000 hours to provide the services offered in CWC's three programs in 2012.

♦ **The In-Home Respite and Visiting Program** provides caregivers of older adults with a weekly break from care giving and friendly companionship to dependent adults.

♦ **The Time Off for Caregivers Program**, which is the only weekend program in Yolo County to offer on-site social respite activities, is offered two Saturdays per month at the Davis Senior Center to provide caregivers with a five-hour break each day and provide frail family members with stimulating activities such as music, art, exercise and a healthy lunch.

♦ **The Convalescent Hospital Visiting and Pet Visitation Program** offers companionship and mental stimulation to socially isolated, elderly residents. Volunteers of all ages visit frail seniors weekly – some are accompanied by a pet visitor.

Frequently Asked Questions



I FEEL BAD WHEN I LEAVE MY SPOUSE TO DO THINGS FOR MYSELF. IS THIS SORT OF GUILT NORMAL AND WHY SHOULD I TAKE TIME FOR MYSELF?

When someone you love becomes dependent on you or even feels comfortable only asking you for things, it is hard to leave them. But Citizens Who Care provides trained volunteers so you can step out and have much-needed time for yourself. As a caregiver, you must remember to take care of yourself first. You can only give as much care as you are putting into yourself.

WHAT TO DO: Remember that it is OK to take care of yourself. You need to get out of the house to take time for you. Caregivers often struggle with the overwhelming juggling act of raising children, maintaining a full-time career and providing necessary care for a loved one. Never be afraid to ask for help. Asking for help and accessing respite are necessary parts of the caregiver role. And look for different opportunities to bring laughter into your life daily. Laughter is one of the best stress busters ever!

MY MOTHER KEEPS FORGETTING NAMES, WORDS, APPOINTMENTS AND EVEN WHERE SHE'S LEFT THE CAR. IS IT ALZHEIMER'S?

Everybody forgets things once in a while, and aging, stress, multitasking and even some common medications can make memory lapses a little worse. It's normal to occasionally forget names, appointments or where you put those pesky car keys and then remember the information later on. But one potential early warning sign for Alzheimer's disease is forgetting important dates and names as well as new facts you've just learned (such as how to work the new TV), and then asking for the information repeatedly. While it's normal to lose your car keys, it's not normal to forget how to use them.

WHAT TO DO: All the "not normal" examples are signs that it's time to see a doctor for an evaluation.

MY HUSBAND SEEMS TO BE MORE AND MORE LIVING IN THE PAST. HOW CAN I COMMUNICATE WITH HIM ON HIS LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

People with dementia seem to forget more and more and the most recent events seem to be forgotten most quickly. Occasionally though, clear "pockets of memory" are still present and are usually triggered by familiar faces, smells, touches, songs or rituals. Your husband no longer exists in your reality as he did before his dementia, but lives more and more in his own world in which present and past blend together and in which the rules and structures of the "old world" – what is right, what is important – lose importance.

WHAT TO DO: To connect with your husband with dementia, you must enter into his reality and stop trying to bring him into your reality. While your husband's memories are fading, it is still possible to share meaningful moments with him, as long as you stop expecting him to exist as he did before the dementia.

TAKING CARE OF Mom

Family finds support and companionship for elderly mother

Life changed for Maria and Michael Brana, when they decided to move Michael's mother Muriel from Chicago to live with them Northern California. Michael's father had passed away and they noticed a decline in Muriel's ability to care for herself.

Caring for Muriel was so demanding Michael quit his job to tend to her full time.

"When you are caring for a loved one 100 percent of the time, it is crucial to have a break," says Maria, explaining how she and her husband turned to Citizens Who Care when they realized they couldn't do everything themselves. The program is more affordable than paying for in-home care, Maria says, and she says it is important for her marriage as well.

The Branases started using the In-Home Respite and Visiting Program, which brings a volunteer into the home for a couple hours each week.

Retired homemaker and widow, Lucille Sandal worked every Thursday for two hours as Muriel's volunteer. She says the two enjoyed

doing crossword puzzles together and just chatting.

"I had three children and I know how great it was to have someone babysit them for me. It's the same for caregivers," Sandal says. "I'm glad I can give someone free time like that."

The Branases were pleased with the program and decided to try the Time Off for Caregivers Program, which gives caregivers a five-hour break two Saturdays each month by offering social activities at the Davis Senior Center.

"We know she is in good hands, and the volunteers really seem to enjoy caring for her," says Maria. "They make her feel special."

Despite suffering from memory loss, Muriel remembers the Saturday program and is always excited to go.

"She can't remember what she ate five minutes ago, but when she gets home she remembers that they played bingo or went to the farmers market," Maria says. "I wish it was every Saturday."

BY Amanda Caraway



Muriel Brana plays Jenga with a volunteer at the Time Off for Caregivers program.

"We know she is in good hands, and the volunteers really seem to enjoy caring for her. They make her feel special."

MARIA BRANA

Caring For Yourself First

Retired nurse Gloria Thomas has found herself in a new caregiving role as her husband's "full-time wife." Gloria rejects the term "caregiver" and says her job is to help Dean, a self-employed artist who struggles with memory loss, be himself.

"He needs more attention now and it is a joy to help him," Gloria says. "It is my job to assist him in remembering by keeping him active and engaged. It's an ongoing process."

Gloria's experience as a registered nurse makes it difficult for her to pull back and focus on being a wife rather than a nurse. However, her experience also helps her know what questions to ask doctors and how important it is to find avenues of support.

"Caregivers need to remember to help themselves first," she says. "It is important to not let the well go dry by making time for myself."

Gloria discovered Citizens Who Care through her therapist, who told her about their programs like the In-Home Respite and Visiting Program. The program sends a volunteer to their home for two hours every Monday, giving Gloria the opportunity to run errands and pursue her personal interests.

"They take great care in matching their clientele with volunteers," said Gloria. "Dean really clicked with the volunteer that they sent. Both are creative and intellectual and they really enjoy each other's company."

Wife is able to take care of herself while volunteers help her husband

"Caregivers need to remember to help themselves first. It is important to not let the well go dry by making time for myself."

GLORIA THOMAS

The Thomases also participate in the Time Off for Caregivers Program offering social respite activities at the Davis Senior Center two Saturdays each month. The program gives Gloria a much-needed five-hour break to do things like have lunch with friends.

"It is difficult to find affordable things for him to do," Gloria says. "He enjoys the physical activities like the walks to the farmers market and the opportunity to meet people with similar interests."

BY Amanda Caraway



PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

Gloria and Dean Thomas are thankful for Citizens Who Care's In-Home Respite and Visiting and Time Off for Caregivers programs.

Beating THE ODDS

- ◇ **63%** increase in mortality occurs for elderly spousal caregivers (ages 66-96) who experience caregiver-related stress. *Caregiving as a Risk Factor for Mortality: The Caregiver Health Effects Study, JAMA*
- ◇ **66%** of caregivers are women, and many are still taking care of children under the age of 18. *AARP*
- ◇ **90%** of elderly people prefer to stay at home as long as they can, with those who do usually having a longer and higher-quality life. *AARP*
- ◇ **60%** of nursing home residents have no visitors. *AARP*
- ◇ **44 million** Americans age 18 and older provide unpaid assistance and support to older people and adults with disabilities who live in their community. *National Alliance for Caregiving, AARP*

Become A Citizen Who *Cares*

Donate

Citizens Who Care for The Elderly needs your help to provide its programs for free to all residents. Donations help CWC employ a small staff that assesses the needs of local elderly and trains volunteers who care for them.

Other ways to help:

Attend CWC's Davis Beerfest (first Saturday in June) and the Winter Concert (February).

Donate online or by mail.

Volunteer

Forge a new friendship with dependent seniors and their families to give back to the community. Citizens Who Care provides a variety of volunteer opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds.

For more information about volunteering, visit www.citizenswhocare.us, call (530) 758-3704 or email the Director of Volunteers at cwvc@dcn.org. You may submit the volunteer application via fax at (530) 668-8788 or mail:

Citizens Who Care
409 Lincoln Ave.
Woodland, CA 95695
www.citizenswhocare.us



Other Resources

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP:

2-1-1 Yolo
www.211yolo.org
Phone: 211

Alzheimer's Association
www.alz.org/norcal
(800) 272-3900

Area 4 Agency on Aging
www.a4aa.com
(916) 486-1876

Citizens Who Care for The Elderly
www.citizenswhocare.us
(530) 758-3704

Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center
www.deloro.org
(916) 728-9333

The Dementia Whisperers
www.dementiawhisperers.com
(916) 663-0770

Sacramento In-Home Support Services
www.dhhs.saccounty.net
(916) 874-9471

VA Caregiver Support Program
(855) 260-3274

Yolo County In-Home Support Services
www.yolocounty.org
(530) 661-2955 (Woodland)
(916) 375-6200 (West Sac)

ADULT DAY CENTERS:

Altamedix Adult Day Health Center Sacramento
(916) 648-3999

The Chateau at Carmichael Park Adult Day Care Program
(916) 482-2850

Eskaton Adult Day Health Center Carmichael
www.eskaton.org
(916) 334-0296

Golden Days Adult Day Health Care Center, West Sacramento
(916) 371-6011

Rancho Cordova Adult Day Health Care Center
(916) 369-1113

Yolo Adult Day Health Center
woodlandhealthcare.org
(530) 666-8828



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