

# Family Caregiver Newsletter

Newsletter Date August 2014

## The Powerful Caregiver

*This column is named after the class "Powerful Tools for Caregivers," a six-session workshop on helping caregiving families thrive (not just survive). It is offered in Racine County several times a year.*

### What's Your Plan B?

*Mary has always been a devoted wife and dependable mother and grandmother. When her husband Rob was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, she took extra chores in her stride. At first it was mainly taking him to medical appointments and gradually taking over the outdoor chores and house maintenance tasks that Rob could no longer do. Then there was the ever-changing medication schedule to keep track of.*

*As Rob's abilities declined, Mary helped him in and out of bed, his lift chair, the car, and later a wheelchair. She helped him shower and use the toilet. She served him food and fluids carefully prepared to avoid the risk of choking. She's cleaned up after "accidents," and has done mountains of laundry. Mary was beginning to feel overwhelmed, but she kept smiling and told her family, neighbors, and others who asked, that she was*

*managing just fine.*

*Now, without warning, Mary is seriously ill and needs immediate surgery followed by weeks of recovery and treatment. She is in a great deal of distress and pain, made worse by worry and fear.*

*Her uppermost thought is:  
**"Who will take care of my dear husband?"***

This situation is not uncommon. Caregivers are at risk for even more serious health problems than the general population. Ongoing stress and physical demands wreak havoc on the whole body. Every caregiving family needs to have a "Plan B," This can range from having family members replace the primary caregiver to using paid services at home or arranging for a



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respite stay at a care facility. If you are a primary caregiver, **tell this to family members.** They need to know so that instead of fumbling in the dark in a crisis they can plan ahead and find solutions.

How can a Plan B be designed? First, the team needs information, which can be gathered even by someone who lives far away. Here are some questions Rob’s family might have asked ahead of time:

- What does Rob need help with? How is he assisted in moving from one place to another? What is his usual daily schedule? How does Mary prepare food and fluids for Rob to avoid choking? What are his likes and dislikes?
- Who are his doctors? What symptoms need to be reported? Where are upcoming appointments written? What medications does he take? When and how much? What pharmacy is used?
- Has a Power of Attorney for Health Care or Five Wishes document been completed? Where are copies kept? Has it been activated? If so, who will make medical decisions for Rob?
- How do Mary and Rob handle money, and where are financial records kept?
- What is needed to maintain the house and yard?
- What help is available in the

community? How will services be paid for? Is Rob eligible for public funding or Veterans’ Benefits? **(Someone needs to contact the ADRC at 262-833-8777 to help answer these questions.)**

A good team needs a captain and a huddle now and then. Family “Care Teams” especially need to share ideas and communicate well. So someone needs to arrange a meeting. Anyone involved, including friends, should be included. People can attend in person, by phone or by video. (thank you, technology!)

Here are a few guidelines for family meetings:

Family members (especially siblings) have a long history in common. Sometimes past grievances can bubble over. It’s necessary (and healthy) to let go of the past and just focus on the present situation and common concern for the person everyone cares about.

Everyone needs a chance to voice their concerns and say what they are able to contribute. Someone should take notes of the meeting to share with everyone along with information gathered before the meeting and how to contact other team members.

When making decisions it’s good to make a list of various choices and then list pros and cons of each. Often more than one idea can be combined for a workable solution. When Plan B time comes, you may need to make some changes, de-

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pending on what circumstances develop.

Working together for the good of a family member can be a rewarding connection for everybody.

*It is very difficult for the family to take care of Rob and be there for Mary during her crisis. They realize that it would have been better to have more information and a Plan B*

*in place ahead of time. With everyone pulling together, Rob and Mary receive the care they need from family, friends, day respite programs, and in-home services. Mary regains her health, and she agrees to accept more help from now on so she can be Rob's loving, healthy wife for a long time to come.*



## Community Resources

*This column highlights some of the many resources in our community. For more, see the [Community Resource Directory](#) available from the Aging and Disability Resource Center (262-833-8777) or [www.adrc.racineco.com](http://www.adrc.racineco.com).*

Here are a few ways to get or purchase services in approximate order of costliness:

- A Care Team of family and friends who are able to meet the needs of the care receiver
- Adult Day Services (Daytime, M-F)
- Part-time services from an in-home assistance/personal care agency
- Live-in caregiver from an agency
- Around-the-clock services from an agency
- A respite stay at an Assisted Living or Skilled Nursing Facility

**Living Options in Racine County** is a directory that includes information on home resources, apartments, assisted living, and nursing home options. A checklist for gathering information about several Assisted Living Facilities helps each family decide the

best fit for their situation.

The **Community Resource Directory** has a wealth of information on a wide array of services available to adults in Racine County. You will find lists of in-home assistance agencies, adult day care, and much more.

For either directory contact the ADRC at 262-833-8777 and one or more can be mailed to you at no cost, or they are available online at: <http://adrc.racineco.com> – see the Racine County Resources tab on the left and go to service directory for pdf copies of our most current versions.

**Ask us** (the caregiver support specialists) about facilitating family meetings!

*May I have...  
Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can, and  
Wisdom to know the difference.*





14200 Washington Ave  
Sturtevant, WI 53177

## Caregiver Opportunities

### Family Conversations with Older Drivers

Need help having “the talk” with a loved one? Sponsored by AARP Driver Safety, this class guides families in determining when it’s time for their loved ones to hang up the keys. The seminar is FREE and offers practical tips and advice on three main topics.

Held at the **Aging and Disability Resource Center of Racine County**, 14200 Washington Ave Sturtevant, WI 53177

**Thursday August 28, 2014**  
**6:00 - 7:30 pm**

**Call (262) 833-8777 to register**

### Coming in September! Powerful Tools for Caregivers

A class to help family member care for themselves and cope with caregiving. September 17 thru October 22. **Call for more info 262-833-8777.**

## Support Groups for Family Caregivers

### First Thursday 10:30 am-12 Noon **Alzheimer’s Association Group**

**August 7th**

For Families Dealing with Alzheimer’s and other Dementias  
Lincoln Lutheran Office Bldg, 2000 Domanik Drive, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

### First Friday 12 Noon-1pm “*Caregiver Connection*” Telephone Group

**August 1st**

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register

### Second Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm

**August 12th**

Yorkville United Methodist Church

17645 Old Yorkville Rd. (3 Miles West of I-94, Just N. of Highway 20)

### Second Saturday 10:30 am–12 Noon

**August 9th**

Atonement Lutheran Church

2915 Wright Ave

Park and enter in back of building (on South side)

### Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm

**August 20th**

Burlington Senior Center, Eppers Room,  
209 N. Main St

### Third Thursday 6:00-7:30 pm

**August 21st**

### **Alzheimer’s Association Group**

For Families Dealing with Alzheimer’s and other Dementias  
Atonement Lutheran Church, 2915 Wright Ave  
Park and enter in back of building (on South side)