



SPRING 2022: Volume 44

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Visit COFA Website

In Support of Caregivers

A Publication of the Caregivers' Resource Center and
Alzheimer's Support Unit at the Tompkins County
Office for the Aging



Caregiver Resources

Local Caregiver Support Services

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

Caregiver's Resource Center: Amy Jackson 607-274-5486

Project Care Services: Dawn Sprague 607-274-5499

The Caregiver's Resource Center & Alzheimer's Support Unit offers family caregivers information, consultation services, workshops, this newsletter, packets of information that are helpful to caregivers, and a lending library of books on family caregiving topics. Stop by or call Amy for an appointment.

The Tompkins County Long-Term Care Unit may be able to arrange for paid home care services or short-term respite for stressed caregivers having difficulty paying for those services. Call 607-274-5278 to discuss your needs.

Caregiver Counseling

Family and Children's Services - 607-273-7494

A caregiver counselor will meet with family caregivers monthly to help them work through complex caregiving issues or provide emotional support. No charge. Donations accepted.

Individual Counseling and Support

Individual counselors can provide clinical and therapeutic counseling and support for you and/or your loved one.

Ann Dolan, LCSW (counseling for ages 60+ or caregiver for 60+)
(607) 708-0808

Buttermilk Falls Therapy Services (Lisa Luciano, LCSW-R, ACSW)
(607) 591-2763

Adult Day Program

NOTE: This program has been on hold due to COVID-19 but is hoping to start again early Summer 2022. Call directly for information on when it may be re-starting

Longview Adult Day Community

Monday through Friday, 9am-3pm; contact Pamela Nardi at 607-375-6323 for more information.

Adult day programs offer older adults companionship along with planned social and recreational activities. It often provides a break from caregiving and time for other matters. Fee: \$75/day includes lunch and snack; minimum 2 days per week.



SUPPORT GROUPS

Note: Some Support Groups are still meeting virtually.

Family Caregiver Supportive Group Discussion

Every Tuesday at 11 am in-person or online via Zoom, offered by the Tompkins County Office for the Aging. To register or for more information call Amy at 607-274-5486.

Brookdale Caregiver Support Group

Last Thursday of every month at 5:30pm in person at Brookdale Ithaca. For more information contact Brookdale at 607-643-8021.

Alzheimer's Caregiver Groups

1st Wednesday of the month at 5:30pm online via Zoom. For information, call the Alzheimer's Association at 1-800-272-3900.

3rd Wednesday of the month at 12:30 pm online via Zoom through Walden Place, Cortlandville. Call 607-756-8101 for information.

Cancer Caregiver Group

2nd Tuesday of the month, 5:30-7:00pm online via Zoom through the Cancer Resource Center of the Finger Lakes. For family, friends and caregivers of individuals with Cancer. For information call 607-277-0960.

Parkinson's Caregivers Group

For more information, call Carol Grove at 607-279-8257

Funding for Family Caregiver Respite

The Tompkins County Office for the Aging has a limited amount of funding to help family caregivers afford to hire substitute care that enables them to take a break from caregiving, usually a few hours a week. We have some uncommitted funds available if you know a family caregiver who might want to take advantage of this opportunity.

Title III-E Respite: This is federal funding that pays for respite service for family caregivers who are caring for an older adult (60 or older) who needs assistance with 2 or more ADL's (dressing, bathing, incontinence, transferring, toileting, eating) **OR** needs substantial supervision due to cognitive impairment (e.g., Alzheimer's or other dementia).

Alzheimer's Respite Scholarships: This is New York State funding granted to Tompkins County through the CNY Alzheimer's Association. This funding pays for respite service (at home or in a licensed care facility) to give a break to family caregivers of persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's or other dementia.

Although neither program is means-tested, we do try to target these funds to those who find it difficult to privately hire enough substitute care.

To Apply or Inquire:

Please encourage family caregivers to contact **Joanne Wilcox** or **Terry McCann** at **Tompkins County Adult and Long Term Care Services (607-274-5278)**. Due to the overall shortage of aides, or if clients prefer it, they may be able to use this funding to privately hire friends or relatives through the Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC) Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP).

Caregiver Articles

Spring Cleaning: How to Refresh Your Caregiving Routine

By Carol Bradley Bursack, "Minding Our Elders", www.agingcare.com

For many families, spring is a time to shake off the winter blues, deep clean their homes and focus on getting organized. Decluttering your physical environment can help you focus, minimize stress and be more productive. The same can be said for family caregivers' care plans.

It's human tendency to get stuck in our ways as we meet life's demands, and caregiving is no exception. As time passes and circumstances change, the routines we have fallen into could often use some refreshing. With spring upon us, now is a good time to take an objective look at our care plans to see if there are any aspects in need of improvement. Use the pro/con approach below to see if you can make adjustments that will enhance your quality of life and that of your loved one.

Evaluate Your Care Plan

The first step is to make a pro/con list for your care plan, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. This step can help you assess your strategy for reaching any goal, from budgeting to weight loss. I've provided the following template which contains examples for a hypothetical caregiver I'll call Ann. If you're up for a little self-reflection, Ann's list could help inspire you to refresh your caregiving routine and jumpstart your own self-improvement.

Strengths of My Caregiving Routine

- I found a wonderful [assisted living](#) facility (ALF) for Mom near my home, which has allowed me to enjoy more time with other family members and my friends.
- It took a while, but Mom adjusted to her new life and now enjoys her own friends and the activities the facility provides.
- Mom also feels very safe, which is important to both of us. Knowing she has professional caregivers around allows me to relax while I'm at work and not worry so much.
- I've developed a good system for shopping for Mom's needs that integrates with my other errands. This has saved me a lot of time.

Weaknesses of My Caregiving Routine

- I keep correcting Mom when we are talking. I'm told that, because of her Alzheimer's, arguing is counterproductive and I should agree with her statements no matter how outlandish they seem. Of course, there are exceptions, but those times are rare.
- I'm angry with my brother because he won't travel to see Mom. Sometimes she doesn't recognize him and forgets he's even been there, but I feel that he should visit anyway.
- I've been so happy Mom is content that I haven't followed her doctor's advice. He says I should use this time to learn about the stages of Alzheimer's and that I should research possible changes in her care needs.
- I keep putting off making appointments for my annual physical, mammogram and other [routine medical tests](#) because Mom has so many of her own medical appointments. Those take time, and I get tired of sitting in clinics.

Reflect on Your Lists

Once you have made your lists, it's important to take time to reflect on both of them. You have likely worked hard to get to this place in your life and you deserve credit for all that you've done. It's important to acknowledge everything you've done right. Caregiving takes a great deal of research, patience, effort, time, and trial and error. You've made big strides even though it may seem overwhelming at times. Never shy away from giving yourself a pat on the back.

The next step is to analyze your list of caregiving challenges and setbacks to see if you can make changes that will improve your life and that of your loved one. Whether your second list is big or small, do not be intimidated. It will take work, but the goal here is to find solutions to these issues one at a time. This exercise should relieve stress and simplify your life, not cause you to feel more burdened.

Find Caregiving Solutions

Using Ann's list above, I devised some solutions that could help fix these hypothetical issues for her and others. Writing down your ideas as you brainstorm will help you remember and track your progress through this list. Even if you can't see to all of these solutions now, you'll have a game plan already prepared for when you have a bit of free time to tackle the next issue.

Refresh #1: I keep correcting Mom when we're talking.

Admittedly, [communicating with dementia patients](#) is challenging. It's hard to listen to people you once admired for their wisdom when they make bizarre statements. Our initial reflex is to correct them, which only makes matters worse. Also, you may feel that "lying" to a loved one with dementia is wrong. You may even think that agreeing with them when they are confused or mistaken is condescending. This is a complex situation that every dementia caregiver experiences, but the answer lies in changing your thought process and approach.

Accept the wisdom of those who have studied the disease. They will tell you that when you validate your loved one, you are showing them compassion, not patronizing them. Conversely, arguing only increases the person's agitation and erodes their self-esteem. Your loved one is living in an unchangeable reality that is different from yours but very real to them. You are the well person, so it's up to you to meet your loved one in their version of reality and help them accept and work through it. When you adapt to this way of thinking, life will be easier for both of you.

Read: [Playing Along with A Dementia Patient's Realities](#)

Refresh #2: I'm angry at my brother's lack of involvement.

As unfair as it seems, there are many reasons why [siblings don't help with caregiving](#). Even though you do not agree with his reasoning, try to understand why your brother doesn't feel his visits are meaningful. He travels several hundred miles to visit Mom, who doesn't always remember who he is and will forget his visit as soon as he leaves. Not only do these visits take time and cost money, but he probably feels a great deal of grief during and afterwards.

Instead of becoming angry and reprimanding him for his lack of attention to Mom, suggest that your brother visit whenever he can for his own sake. Let him know that you understand it's hard for him and it may seem like a waste of time. Thank him for the help and support he does contribute. However, you may want to point out that he'll probably feel better emotionally after Mom is gone if he visits occasionally, no matter how painful it is.

If visits still aren't his cup of tea, suggest that he at least call weekly or write Mom short notes every so often and send pictures of the family. Although communicating by phone and mail can still be challenging and upsetting, they are less involved ways of maintaining this connection and showing Mom that she's loved. As caregivers, at some point we must realize that we cannot change others and learn to pick our battles.

Refresh #3: I haven't taken time to learn about the progression of Mom's condition.

You should be proud of the fact that your mom's move to assisted living has been successful. You both have more help and resources available, which ensures that Mom is well cared for and gives you peace of mind. However, caregiving needs can change quickly, especially when dementia is a factor.

It would be wise to give yourself a deadline to begin researching the next steps in her care and make a to-do list of future bases that must be covered. The first objective is completing the research itself, which can be done at your convenience online. You can also speak with Mom's doctor, social workers, nurses and other medical professionals (if you have the [proper legal documents](#)) to get more personalized insight into her condition. While each dementia patient experiences a unique progression through stages and symptoms, a ballpark idea of what to expect is invaluable.

Ideally, you should have already spoken with the administrator at Mom's assisted living facility to learn about how costs will increase along with her growing needs. More importantly, you'll need to know exactly what kind of limits there are on the type of care the facility and its staff can provide. Once Mom surpasses that level of care, she will need to move to a higher level facility, such as a specialized memory care unit or skilled nursing facility. For this reason, it is very helpful to investigate these senior living options in your community so that you are prepared if/when this move becomes necessary. Ask friends, family and medical professionals for referrals, and search online for care providers in your area.

All of this doesn't have to be done at once, but having these objectives on your radar and planning ahead for them will help minimize unnecessary surprises.

Refresh #4: I keep putting off my own medical appointments.

While it may seem counterintuitive, the cardinal rule of caregiving should be: take care of yourself. Your mom has professionals looking after her most of the time. Yes, you take her to medical appointments, but you still need to make time for your own. Whether you realize it or not, [caregiving affects your health](#).

As I mentioned above, care needs can change quickly. Use this time to get caught up on your own physical and mental health care. It will ensure you're better prepared to handle changes in your mom's needs. Furthermore, if you neglect yourself and fall ill, then who will visit with and advocate for Mom? The better shape you're in, the better you'll be able to care for your loved one.

Refreshing Your Own Care Plan

We've gone through Ann's hypothetical care plan refresher, but now it's time to examine your routine and write out your own lists. Maybe you'll only have one or two areas that could use improvement, or maybe you'll have a significant list of challenges to address. This exercise may seem overwhelming, but it's crucial to think about your care plan from time to time to ensure you are meeting all needs (including your own), you are able to handle emerging changes, and to certify that your approach is still the most efficient one. Just remember to give yourself credit for your caregiving "wins" and allocate ample time when it comes to rectifying problems. If you take the time to develop a solid care plan now and revisit it every few months, your challenges list (and stress!) should begin to shrink.

SPRING SAFETY TIPS FOR SENIORS: USE THIS HANDY CHECKLIST FOR CHECK-UPS

By DailyCaring.com Editorial Team



Regular home safety check-ups keep seniors safe

Spring is a great time to take a fresh look at your older adult's home to make sure it's as safe as possible.

Hazards add up over time and increase the risk of falls or accidents – a top reason for seniors to lose mobility or decline in health. Regular home safety check-ups reduce fall-risk and help them stay as independent as possible.

We created a [handy printable checklist](#) of essential spring safety tips. Use this free checklist to help you notice things around the house, fix safety issues, and take notes if larger repairs are needed.

Use this printable checklist to keep seniors safe at home

Once or twice a year, go through this checklist of important safety updates to keep your older adult's home in tip-top shape.

Our printable checklist includes:

Medication

- Update the list of all medications, vitamins, and supplements
- Safely dispose of any expired or discontinued medications

Bathroom

- Install [grab bars](#) (if needed) or make sure existing ones are sturdy and well-attached
- Replace bath mats with [non-skid low profile mats](#)
- Install a [raised toilet seat or safety frame](#) (if needed) or check that existing ones are sturdy
- Make sure tub or shower floor is non-slip – try this [at-home treatment](#) or these [stick-on decals](#)
- Add [automatic night lights](#) to make it easy to see at night

Kitchen

- Prominently post emergency contact information on the fridge and near the telephone
- Check that appliances are in good working condition and within easy reach
- Place frequently used items in easy reach
- Put away appliances that are rarely used to remove clutter
- Check that the stove, refrigerator, and freezer are in good working condition

Bedroom

- Use [automatic night lights](#) to light the way to the bathroom
- Check that the [bedside lamp](#) is easy to turn on and off
- Make sure the phone and/or [medical alert device](#) is easy to reach from the bed
- Check that the bed is easy to get into and out of or add an aid [like this one](#)
- Keep clothing and daily dressing & grooming items within easy reach

General house

- Set the water heater at a temperature that won't scald
- Check that all sinks and drains are in good working order
- Clear hallways and main floor spaces of [dangerous clutter](#)
- Secure all electrical cords at the edges of rooms
- Make sure [lighting](#) is bright, that there are on/off switches at every doorway, and replace light bulbs as needed or switch to long-lasting LED bulbs
- Change smoke detector batteries or switch to a 10-year smoke detector
- Make sure fire extinguishers are fully charged and easily accessible
- Check that furniture is sturdy and in good shape – no wobbly or sliding chairs
- Check that flooring is smooth and free of tripping hazards

Outside the house

- Make sure that house numbers are clearly visible from the street, night and day
- Check that walkways are clear, free of tripping hazards, and have supportive handrails (as needed)

Spring Walks for Remembering

By Caregiversactivitysource.com

Spring is here and there is so much to see and remember.

Each season has its own beauty, but spring brings new beginnings. Now we can look forward to new life occurring right before our eyes and remembering past Spring seasons.



Spring Walks

*Planning Walks for Exercise,
Sensory, and Reminiscing*

visit CaregiversActivitySource.com



This Spring, take a walk with an older loved one and enjoy what this season has to offer. Use this as an opportunity for reminiscing.

Here are some activities to enjoy and questions for reminiscing.

- **Find Spring flowers** like tulips, daffodils, crocuses, hyacinths, snowdrops, and pansies. If it's possible, bring some cutting indoors. *Did you ever plant spring flowers? Which ones did you enjoy planting? Who in the neighborhood always had the best flowers? Did you ever cut them and bring them indoors?*
- **Search for flowers, plants and perennials that are emerging from the soil** in public or private gardens. **If you are walking through your own garden, spread some seeds** where plants can grow. Place some seeds in an old, clean spice bottle and use as a seed spreader. Each time you walk, watch the growth from the seeds you planted. *Did you ever plant a garden? If so what kinds of plants did you have? What plants were your favorite? What are your favorites now? What was the easiest/hardest to grow?*
- **Look for animals, bugs, bees, and butterflies** along your walk. *Did you have any favorite bugs as a child? Did you ever plant a butterfly garden to attract butterflies?*
- **Look for birds and birds nests and listen for birds.** Are there any young birds or birds looking for nesting materials, food and water? Can you identify any birds? *Do you enjoy birds? Did you ever put out bird feeders or bird baths? Did you ever enjoy bird watching? What are your favorite birds?*
- **Go to the park to fly a kite** or watch the grandkids or other children fly one. *Did you ever fly a kite as a kid? Did you fly kites with your children? What was spring time like as a kid? What were your favorite activities to participate in?*
- After dying Easter eggs with the grandkids, **hide the eggs along a walk** in the yard. Have an elder help a child to hunt for the eggs. *Did you always enjoy coloring Easter eggs? What was Easter like as a child? What did you do for Easter with your children?*
- **Pick some spring fruits and vegetables** like strawberries, asparagus, lettuce, spinach, and others or find some at a market. On your outing plan what you will do with them. *What was your favorite fruit/vegetable as a child? Was there a vegetable/fruit dish you were fond of? Can you remember the recipe?*
- When walking in the neighborhood **watch for children** riding their bikes, trikes and scooters. **Watch for pet walkers, neighbors, and other activity.** *Who were your neighbors when you were a child or young adult? Were you close to your neighbors? Did you have family that lived in the neighborhood?*

- **Go on a tree scouting walk** to look for flowering trees and trees with leaves starting to unfold. *What are your favorite trees? Did you have any trees in your yard or neighborhood growing up that you were fond of?*
- **Listen to some relaxing music** along your walk. What music relaxes your loved one? *What music puts you in a calm mood? What was your favorite music as a child? Is it the same as the music you enjoy now? Who is your favorite music artist?*

Where to walk:

- Your yard or an elder's yard
- Neighborhood
- Park
- Public or private garden
- Nursery

Things to keep an eye out for on your walk

- Flowers, plants, grass, and trees
- Animals, bugs, bees, and butterflies
- Kites
- Weather signs of rain or remnants of snow
- Sprinklers
- Rainbows after a rainstorm
- Sunshine
- Anything with color-greens, purples, blues, oranges, yellow
- Neighbors and people involved in activities that you may socialize with

Program Updates



TOMPKINS COUNTY
OFFICE FOR THE AGING
Aging Better, Together

Personal Emergency Response Systems

Are you worried about a friend or a family member falling while you are away and not getting the help that they need right away? Do you have a plan in place if they do have a fall or a medical emergency?

Our office may be able to help! We contract with Doyle Medical Monitoring to supply our older adults in the community with Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS). Whether they are homebound, or on the go, our units are waterproof and wearable for easy access whenever it is needed.

For more information, or to sign up for one, please call our office to speak with an Outreach Worker at 607-274-5482!



NYS Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP)

Serving Tompkins, Chemung, and Schuyler Counties

Educate Empower Advocate

Certified Long-Term Care Ombudsmen provide *free-of-charge* services to individuals who reside in long term care facilities (nursing homes, assisted living and adult-care facilities) and the relatives and friends who act on their behalf.

A trained and certified Long-Term Care Ombudsman conducts regular facility visits, helps identify and resolve concerns, and acts as an advocate for residents on issues regarding:

- Quality of care
- Abuse and neglect
- Rights violations
- Lost and stolen belongings
- Dietary concerns
- Discharge, eviction or termination of services
- Public benefits programs
- Cost of care

For more information or to volunteer:

www.ltcombudsman.ny.gov or 607-274-5498



Volunteer Spotlight: Q&A with Steve

With so many great organizations to support, why should others choose to support LTCOP?

LTCOP provides a vital advocacy service for those who are unable to speak and act for themselves. The program helps residents by investigating and working to resolve resident complaints.

What was most surprising to you about the LTCOP Program?

The program provides an excellent in-service training program in areas of elder law, Medicare and Medicaid provisions, communications strategies for reaching memory impaired residents and elder abuse.

Why do you continue to support LTCOP?

So many residents I meet have no families nearby or friends or members of a faith community that help them resolve small and bigger problems.

How has this program changed you?

It has made me more knowledgeable on issues facing our nation's growing senior citizen population and how these issues can be resolved.



Office of the State
Long Term Care
Ombudsman



Project CARE

Would you or someone you know benefit by being matched with a community volunteer who can visit you weekly in your home, virtually, or by phone?

Seniors aged 60 or over & living in Tompkins County can request to have a friendly visitor through our Project CARE program at no cost.

Weekly visiting option:

Project CARE's **friendly visitor program** provides companionship by matching you with a community volunteer who will make weekly contact in a way you are comfortable with. Project Generations is a part of Project CARE where Seniors are matched with a local college student. Home visits are available with safety precautions in place, or if you have internet access – visits can be done virtually, or a volunteer could provide a weekly phone call.

Many Seniors in our community greatly benefit and find comfort from a weekly visit. Volunteers can provide conversation and so much more. This service can provide in-home support to Seniors who are socially isolated, experiencing loneliness or those that are homebound, especially during the pandemic.

If you are interested in more information or registering for the Project CARE program, please contact:

Dawn Sprague, Project CARE Coordinator

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

Phone (607)274-5499

Email dsprague@tompkins-co.org



The Registry at FLIC

The Registry is a compiled list of private pay aides who have been screened through a face to face interview with the Registry Coordinator at FLIC. References are provided and verified to make sure the aide has the necessary skills and compassion that are important for someone to have when taking care of people in their homes. The Registry also contains a list of skilled nurses varying from pediatrics to palliative care.

For more information **contact Teresa Sivers at 272-2433.**

The Registry program is made possible through funding from the Tompkins County Office for the Aging and the New York State Office for the Aging.



If you, or someone you know, is having a tough time keeping up with the rising heating costs, encourage them to apply for the Home Energy Assistance Program. Our office handles applications for clients who are 60+, and we can be reached at 607-274-5482. For those who are under 60, please call the DSS HEAP Unit to apply at 607-274-5264. The income guidelines are listed below. Clients who are eligible will receive a HEAP benefit that will go directly to their heating vendor as a credit on their account. For more information, please give our office a call. Here's to staying warm!

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Maximum Gross Monthly Income</u>
1	\$2,729
2	\$3,569
3	\$4,409



Proper shoe wear is the first step in Falls Prevention. Our office performs Home Safety Assessments at no cost to the client to identify potential hazards in their home as well as recommendations on how to make their home safer. If you are, or someone you know is, interested in a Falls Prevention Home Safety Assessment, please give our office a call at 607-274-5482!

CAREGIVERS SUPPORT



Webinar:

Medicare Fraud With Sarah Askew

NY StateWide Senior Action Council

**Learn about 6 types of
Medicare fraud and hear tips
on what you can do to prevent,
detect and report healthcare
fraud to the NYS Senior
Medicare Patrol**

**Wednesday, 5/18
10:30 am to 12 pm**

To Register:

(607) 274-5486

ajackson@tompkins-co.org



TOMPKINS COUNTY
OFFICE FOR THE AGING

Aging Better, Together

214 W. Martin Luther King/State St.

(607) 274-5482

www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa



The Caregiver Resource Center at the Office for the Aging

Powerful Tools for Caregivers Classes—stay tuned for upcoming classes in the late Summer/Fall!

Caregiver Workshops—Monthly workshops on topics of interest to caregivers.

Caregiver Supportive Group Discussion—We currently have a caregiver supportive group discussion weekly, and welcome any family caregiver to join us. Contact us to discuss!

Caregiver Library - We loan out books on caregiving. We can mail you a book from our library, or you can pick it up! Reach out for the list of available books, or stop in. We also have two kinds of valuable caregiver packets available free in our library: Dementia: When Memory Fades, & Caregivers: When Loves Ones Age.

Caregiver Resource Counseling - We are available to help caregivers navigate services available in our community.

For more information about these services please contact the Caregiver Resource Center at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging. We'll be glad to help you!

Phone: 607-274-5486

Email: ajackson@tompkins-co.org