

Aging Happens: Caregiving conference coming up Friday

By Ellen Waldman

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If you're not caring for someone now, there's a very good likelihood that you will be in the future. The other possibility is that at some point in your life, you will need someone to care for you. And if you're already a caregiver, you know firsthand how easy it is to overlook caring for your own needs.

Basically, as aging adults, the reality is that our health needs might well be changing. Being prepared with information and resources for caregivers ahead of time is vital to your well-being. Consider these statistics:

- 20 hours per week is the average that family caregivers spend caring for their loved ones.
- 13 percent of family caregivers are providing forty hours of care a week or more.
- 51 percent of care recipients live in their own home.
- 29 percent live with their family caregiver.

Want to know more? Please attend a wonderful event coming up this week. It's called the "2018 Family and Friends Caregiver Conference: Let's Talk about Caregiving." It's from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. this Friday, June 1, at the Smullin Health Education Center, 2825 East Barnett Road, Medford. This is especially designed to be a much-needed break from the role of being a caregiver, which can be 24/7 for some families. This event takes an informed, but light approach to a challenge facing more and more people these days.

I spoke to Sandy Divine, family caregiver specialist with Rogue Valley Council of Government (RVCOG). She shared this info from AARP research:

- 84 percent of caregivers need more info or help on topics related to caregiving.
- 42 percent want info on keeping their loved ones at home.
- 42 percent want help in managing their own stress.

She offered that this conference is a way to give yourself the gift of information, as well as some laughter. It will provide guidance on how to reduce stress during the often challenging caregiving journey.

There will be a variety of guest speakers, including award-winning humor speaker and author, Leigh Anne Jasheway (www.accidentalcomic.com). Her topic is called, "Let's Laugh about Caregiving – To Save Our Sanity and Reduce our Stress." I've seen her presentations in the past and found her focus on finding humor to be just what's needed for such a serious subject.

Additional presentations will include:

Sharon Johnson, Medford Mail Tribune columnist, and executive director of Age-Friendly Innovators, opening the event and serving as moderator.

“Successfully Navigate Healthcare Systems,” with Laura O’Brien, director of Senior and Disability Services at RVCOG.

“Power of Attorney and Protective Proceedings,” understanding these legal issues and choices, with well-known Medford attorney Jason Broesder.

“Prepare to Care,” with Jon Bartholomew, government relations director for AARP Oregon.

Lunch is provided, and there will be prizes and giveaways throughout the event. There is a suggested donation of \$10 at the door. Register for this event by calling 541-618-7572 or go online to www.rvcog.eventbrite.com.

If you would like to attend, but need to have respite services for your care recipient, this will also be available. There is no cost for this service through the Family Caregiver Respite Program. To find out more about this program and its availability, contact the ADRC at 541-618-7572.

Several organizations are co-sponsoring this event: Rogue Valley Council of Governments, Senior and Disability Services, Aging and Disability Resource Connection of Oregon, and AARP. Resource tables will be offering local information on caregiving topics from these organizations and other providers.

Consider this quote from Rosalynn Carter, former First Lady: “There are only four kinds of people in the world — those who have been caregivers, those who are caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers.”

Please attend this conference to prepare for one or more of these caregiving roles that will show up in your life, sooner or later.