



## **“Team” can ease the burden of primary caregiver**

*By Ellen Waldman*

*March 9, 2022*

I’m going to share with you a recent experience on Zoom with a care team. I’m changing some of the details to maintain their privacy. There were 12 people attending: friends and family members, both near and far. They all came together to discuss how to support Marie, who is preparing to place her husband, Carl, in memory care. He was diagnosed with dementia some years ago. Marie has been on the frontlines with his needs, basically 24/7 for all this time. For the last several years, this team participated in whatever ways best provided help. They were well aware of his continued decline into this brain disease. But now, they recognized that this was no longer a sustainable plan for either of them. The time had come to transition to this next phase of both Carl and Marie’s lives.

A care team is at the top of my list for how to prepare for your future needs, and those of loved ones. As things began to change with Carl, this team began to step up, and provided all manner of support and friendship. Outings, phone calls, visits, respite care, meals, etc., were some of what was taking place here. But most importantly, no one expected Marie to go through this alone, including Marie. The reason this worked so well, up to and including the Zoom meeting, is that they created this group before there were any pressing needs.

There are at least two other components that could get added into this approach: one is paid caregivers and the other is a professional care manager. In addition to their care team, Marie accessed these services, too. She came to recognize the vital need for having a plan that included this whole package.

Caregivers were hired from reputable sources and agencies. There are many caregiving agencies you can find in Medford, but make sure they are actual agencies. You’ll know by asking if they pay taxes for those who work for them. Carl developed comfort and ease with a couple of caregivers in particular, which was a great relief. Even though friends continued to be involved, they also knew they were not expected to do it all. No one wants to burn out their friends, and this is the best way to assure that won’t happen.

From time to time, as things needed more clarification and information, they worked with a certified Aging Life Care Manager. In this case, it happened to be me, but it could have been any of those listed on the website, [aginglifecare.org](http://aginglifecare.org). The value to Marie, and later to her team, was they could get professional guidance before making a very important decision and transition. It saved them having to sort this all out on their own, and maybe making the wrong, and therefore, costly choice.

If you attended the recent Plan4Care, free 3-session Zoom seminars offered through OLLI at SOU, you will have heard similar professional guidance. And if not, here’s the link to see the actual presentations, and access the resources and slides, free for the community. Visit <https://bit.ly/3GIPfKO>.

To finish this story, sitting on Zoom with this group of people felt like being on a virtual Love Boat. It was so obvious that everyone had Marie and Carl’s backs, and their hearts as well. If you find this has meaning for you, you might start inviting this into your life now. Never too soon to feel held with love.