



'Prepare for Care' forum coming May 7

By Ellen Waldman

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If you're convinced you might be aging, then you might also consider that the time will come, ready or not, when you might need care. Or you may be called upon to provide care for another. This topic is not always front and center of most people's thoughts, but almost certainly, this is a future that you will face.

When I began writing *Aging Happens* in August 2014, my hope was that it would encourage readers to begin thinking about how to address the changes in their lives as they aged. Beyond that, if people knew what to do in order to prepare for this time, and knowing the resources that were available, that it would spark some real inspiration to put these plans into place. What I have seen is that although many people have taken the necessary steps to prepare, that too many others have found themselves fully unprepared and facing a crisis. Recently, I met with a group of friends who have all decided that planning for their care is now at the top of their lists. At the end of their series of meetings, they shared that it made them feel liberated to actually complete this preparation.

A dedicated group of individuals have been meeting for months now to provide you with the information that will prepare you for the roles of caregiver and/or care receiver. The upcoming Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) Vital Issues Forum (VIF) will inform and support you to actually take these important steps towards becoming ready.

This year's VIF is called, "Prepare for Care: Getting to Plan A and Beyond," subtitled, "The Future of Aging: Who Will Care for Us?" They will address this question: Are you ready physically, financially and practically when (not if) you or an aging loved one needs caregiving? Rarely does the first solution serve the entire lifespan.

It will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, May 7, at Stevenson Union Rogue River Room at Southern Oregon University, 1118 Siskiyou Blvd., Ashland. Registration and refreshments begin at 1:30 p.m. Free parking is available in Lot 36 on South Mountain Ave, across from the music building. Attendance is free, but you need to pre-register by calling 541-552-6048, or online at inside.sou.edu/olli.

The keynote speaker will be Sharon Johnson, well-known local columnist and director of Age-Friendly Innovators. A short, touching video on caregiving will also be included in this presentation. A panel, composed of Laura O'Bryon, Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) Senior and Disability Services director, and myself, as an Aging Life Care specialist, will cover information and resources available to help you. In addition to the panel named above, others instrumental in creating this event are Sandra Theis, Anne Bellegia, Margaret Pashko and Sue Miler. The co-sponsors, besides OLLI at Southern Oregon University, are AARP, Senior and Disability Services at RVCOG, and the Rogue Valley Manor.

I have some inside information on what's going to be presented, so here's a sneak peek: You'll learn how to develop a plan of care and a care team; locate appropriate caregivers; the various options for

housing and how to pay for them; and discover a wide array of community resources, including many that are free or low-cost. Plus, everyone will receive a great packet of hand-outs to support you to begin planning now. Many additional community service providers will display their brochures in the lobby.

Take a look at these numbers. In Ashland, 42 percent of our population is aged 50-plus! In Jackson County, in 2013, the 65-plus population was 19.5 percent; in 2020, it will be 23.2 percent. Some parts of the Rogue Valley besides Ashland have an aging population that is pushing 30 percent now. The fastest growing population across all the demographic groups is 85-plus. At that age, more than 50 percent will need some help and many more will need help before then.

Too often, people struggle on their own when there are so many resources accessible across the whole income spectrum. Families often bear the brunt of having to sort this out when they are knee-deep in crisis. You might actually feel liberated, like the group did that met to resolve their plans ahead of time. There's expert help out there, you just need to know how to access it. You will leave this event with an abundance of information to help you navigate the territory of care needs. Hang onto this, for someone is sure to need it sooner or later. It's how life goes.