



Consider creating a care team

By Ellen Waldman

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If you're feeling the need for some quality connection, engagement, and information, you'd do well to check out the OLLI at SOU catalog of spring courses and offerings (inside.sou.edu/olli). You can join OLLI by clicking on the link and signing up online. You can also contact Pauline Black at blackp@sou.edu or 541-552-6048, and she can help you become a member on the phone. This a terrific time of the year to try out a membership for \$75 with full access for this term. Right now, there are at least 80 classes and much more, including Conversation Connections (Con-Cons). These are one-time meetings on a specific topic of discussion. The format includes a presenter who's familiar with a subject facilitating the conversation. Now everyone has a chance to talk!

One topic that might have relevance to readers of this column is a Con-Cons that I'm hosting on Tuesday April 6, 11:00 AM-Noon. The topic is "Prepare for Care: A Team Approach". Some of you might remember a Vital Issues Forum held at SOU four years ago on this subject. Clearly, there was a lot interest in this, as there were over 400 attendees. I was one of the three presenters at that event, which focused on the most important information needed to prepare in advance for your care needs, and those of your loved ones. One of the topics recommended creating a "care team". The idea is that preparation for care (both giving and receiving it) needs to have a team approach to be truly effective. In fact, there are actually two teams to consider. One team is the formally paid professionals which would include an attorney, financial planner, tax preparer, care manager, physician, etc. The second team is comprised of those with whom you can have important conversations and explore these vital topics. This also includes friends and family who are willing to be there to support one another. Some people in Ashland have further developed this idea into what they're calling their "tribe". Their commitment is to be present with one another through the celebrations of life as well as the challenges of caregiving and end-of-life issues.

I was personally inspired and motivated to bring together my own team approach to aging. With a group of eight other individuals, we have been meeting regularly for the last four years. It's been a very supportive experience that has allowed us to address such topics as filling out all our important documents, preparing for emergencies (fires, earthquakes), keeping informed and up-to-date on medical issues like dementia, and exploring what the end of our lives, including funeral choices, might look like. I believe we can strengthen our communities and meet our future needs by the creation of care teams. During this upcoming Con-Cons program, I will share how we managed to put this all together, our commitments to each other, the additional topics we covered, and how it continues to have a positive effect on our lives.

Meeting people of like-minds is another benefit of an OLLI class, even those being held on Zoom. It might in fact introduce you to other class attendees who decide to "care-team up" and take this step together. This care team approach makes a lot of sense and works quite well for those in our group. See if this might be one idea that fits for you, too.