



Caregiver News Spring

Are You Ready to Age Out Loud?

The federal Administration on Community Living, which distributes monies from the Older Americans Act (OAA)*, celebrates seniors during May. This year's theme is Age Out Loud.

As Boomers continue to become older adults, their needs continue to be magnified. The number of those affected with Alzheimer's and dementia-related diseases, in particular, is climbing. So why are we writing about this in a caregiver newsletter?

For one thing, you are not alone. For another, Age Out Loud has us thinking about the need to share your stories and let the world know how critical it is to build long-term support that will help loved ones age in place.

How does this translate into action?

❖ **Take Charge** – as a caregiver, only *you* can assume command of your situation. Learn all you can about your loved one's disease. Plan ahead. Get help – there's never any shame in asking, but there is a downside if you become

overwhelmed, exhausted, or your own health fails.

❖ **Strive for Wellness** – reduce stress by doing pleasurable activities often. Make appointments for regular check-ups. Eat healthy meals. Whether you are new to caregiving or need a brush-up, sign up for one of our Powerful Tools for Caregivers workshops (see calendar on p. 3).



❖ **Have a Back-up Plan** – It addresses the worry of what to do when you might no longer be able to provide care. Tour long-term care facilities so you're better informed about your options. Getting wait-listed doesn't mean you need to move your loved one into a nursing home when neither one of you is ready.

❖ **Speak Up and Advocate** – One of the legislative priorities for the Vermont Area Agencies on Aging (we're members) is subtitled *Health Happens at Home*. Most of us prefer to age in our own homes.

Let's encourage our legislators to focus on community-based organizations,

such as the Council on Aging, that partner with primary-care providers which work together to keep people healthy in their home, thereby preventing costly hospital and nursing home stays. Pick up your phone!

Let your elected officials know how you, a family caregiver, have been helped by the Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging. Aren't sure who your local representative is?

Call us and ask:

1-800-642-5119.

We're here to help you care out loud!

*Nancy Oakes & Pam Smith
Family Caregiver Support*

Did you know...

...you can report any suspected health care or financial scam to the Senior Medicare Patrol?

Here's the toll-free number:

1-888-865-2683

* For more than 50 years, the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) has provided aging services – like the Council on Aging – funds to help older adults live and thrive in communities of their choice for as long as possible. These services include home-delivered and community meals, caregiver support (that's us!), preventive health services, transportation, job training, elder abuse prevention, and so much more.

Caregiver Spotlight...



Ranson Hudson cared for his late wife, Ginger, who lived with Alzheimer's for more than ten years. High school sweethearts, Ginny graduated a year before Ranson and they were married a month after Ranson received his diploma. They were wedded for 53 years before Ginny passed away last August.

"Ginny was a spunky girl, she knew her own mind," Ranson recalled. "She had a big heart. She was all about family. She loved her kids and grandkids."

He continued, "It is quite a big thing taking care of someone with Alzheimer's, but I figure she would have done it for me. When it is your wife, you are glad to do it, at least I was."

Ranson's advice for others about providing care?

"It's tough taking care of someone with Alzheimer's. If you can help things to go well, fine. Things don't always go good. If that happens, it is important to not get upset yourself but rather calm yourself and go with the flow."

"Don't make too big a deal of it. Always try to make the person with Alzheimer's feel good about herself, no matter what. Treat her like you would want to be treated, with love, respect, understanding and patience. She, or he, is depending on you."

"We had our share of difficult times. It wasn't always easy but we got through them."

One activity Ranson did for himself was to ride his motorcycle with his dog, Molly, a black lab.

"Always try to make the person with Alzheimer's feel good about herself, no matter what. Treat her like you would want to be treated, with love, respect, understanding and patience. She, or he, is depending on you."

They would head to local diners while Ginny was sleeping in the morning or when someone else was staying with her. "Everyone loves Molly, so I felt I was doing a service and making people happy. This gave me a purpose and made me happy as well."

Ranson attended the Alzheimer's and Related Dementia Caregiver Support Group at NVRH in St. Johnsberry. "It is always good to know you're not alone and that there are other people out there with similar or even bigger problems."

He also felt he was able to help others in the group. "Your attitude will help you and everyone around you. Being thoughtful of others takes your mind off self-pity."

Using a dementia respite grant from the Council on Aging, Ransom hired substitute caregivers so he could take time off while Ginny could feel comfortable and secure staying in their home.

While caring for his wife, Ranson experienced some major health issues, including open-heart surgery. With some help from paid caregivers, Ransom's amazing family took over and cared for Ginny while he recuperated.

"If she wanted something I tried to make it happen, and I'm glad I did."

Ranson feels fortunate he did not need to put the love of his life in a nursing home before she died. At the end, the whole family was able to be with her, telling "Grammy Ginny" stories.

"I'm glad for every day I got to enjoy with her."



Caregiver Tip:**Spring is a Time for Renewal**

Take regular breaks to refresh yourself. Make an appointment on your calendar to do it daily. Don't wait until your summer vacation. You need a break NOW!

Here's how it could look:

Daily: a few minutes of meditation, gardening, tai chi, or picking fiddleheads.

Weekly: an hour, or two, away from the house doing something you want to do, not something you feel you should do.

Monthly: an evening out with a friend or loved one.

Yearly: a well-deserved and well-planned vacation.

What else?

Give priority to your own health needs and see your doctor for a physical exam. Make a plan to eat well and exercise regularly.

Did you know our Nutrition Department has a registered dietitian who could meet with you? Call us, Nancy or Pam, and we will help make that happen.

Remember:

When you take care of yourself, everyone benefits, including the loved one you care for and your extended family.

Is There a Silver Lining in This Cloud?

New research reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggests modifying lifestyle behaviors could promote brain health throughout adult life and may lead to a reduced risk of Alzheimer's or dementia.

Given the high number of middle-aged Americans already diagnosed with diabetes and obesity –believed risk factors for dementia – there is an expectation that more will come down with the brain disease as they age.

Please don't wait. Sign up today for our *Healthy Living for your Brain & Body* workshop.*

Funds for Food

Are you finding it difficult to make ends meet?

3SquaresVT is a nutrition program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that boosts your food budget to help you stay healthy and independent.

Call our Senior HelpLine to find out how you might qualify: 1-800-642-5119.

**Calendar of Spring Workshops****April****Dementia Conversations**

Helpful ways to talk effectively with people who have dementia about medical, driving and financial issues.

Thursday, April 27, 6-8 p.m.
Goodrich Memorial Library, Newport

May**Powerful Tools for Caregivers**

Feeling stretched as a caregiver? Take our popular workshop and focus on caring for *yourself*.

Mondays, May 1 – June 5, 6-7:30 PM
Memorial Building, 3rd floor, Hardwick

***Healthy Living for Your Brain & Body**

An Alzheimer's Association Program

Tuesday, May 2, 6-8 PM
NVRH Conference Room 126, ST J

We Need to Talk

Learn how to have that conversation about giving up the keys, ways to make it work and alternative solutions.

Offered by AARP
Thursday, May 4, 6-8 PM
Goodrich Memorial Library, Newport

Effective Communication Skills

An Alzheimer's Association Program
Thursday, May 11, 6-8 PM
Goodrich Memorial Library, Newport

June & July

Communicating with Persons with Dementia: The Best Friends™ Way
Thursday, June 1, 6-8 PM
NVRH Conference Room 126, ST J

Know the Ten Signs: Early Detection Matters
An Alzheimer's Association Program
Wednesday, June 14, 3-5PM
Goodrich Memorial Library, Newport
Thursday, July 6, 3-5pm
Health Center, Island Pond
Thursday, July 13, 6-7:30PM,
NVRH Conference RM 126, ST J

Registration needed for all our caregiver workshops

Call Nancy or Pam at 748-5182 or 334-2190

You can also e-mail: info@nekccouncil.org. Put "caregivers" in subject line. Thanks!



SAINT JOHNSBURY

481 Summer St., Suite 101
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
Phone: 802-748-5182

NEWPORT

5452 US RT 5, Ste. A,
Derby Time Square
Newport, VT 05855
Phone: 802-334-2190

HARDWICK

Merchant's Bank Building
84 Vermont Route 15 West
Hardwick, VT 05843
Phone: 802-472-6625

ISLAND POND

32 Main Street
Island Pond, VT 05846
Phone: 802-723-3013

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://NEKCouncil.org/>

Friend us on



On-Going Groups for Caregivers

Alzheimer's Support Groups:

St. Johnsbury:

NVRH Rm. 224
Last Monday of each month @ 6 PM
Call Pam: 748-5182

Newport:

NCH Rm. 220
4th Tuesday, @6:30 PM
Call Suzi: 673-9499

Morrisville:

Lamoille Home Health
3rd Thursday @ 2 PM

Online Support Group:

<https://www.alzconnected.org/>

**24/7 Telephone Support for
Caregivers of Persons
with Dementia**

Alzheimer's Association Helpline:
1-800-272-3900

**Bereavement Support Group
St. Johnsbury:**

Caledonia Home Health and Hospice
3rd Monday from 6-7:30 PM

**Parkinson's Support Group
St Johnsbury:**

NVRH
3rd Friday from 10:30 AM to noon

**Contributions help the Council on
Aging continue to offer its Family
Caregiver Support programs for
free.**

**\$50 defrays the cost of one
90-minute workshop;
the total workshop cost is \$90.**

**At www.NEKCouncil.org,
click [YOU CAN DONATE](#)
to make a secure gift
using a credit card.**

Thank you!