

**INCREASING AWARENESS
AND
EDUCATING FAITH COMMUNITIES
ABOUT THE NEEDS
OF CAREGIVERS OF OLDER ADULTS**

**A Project of the Care Management Solutions Program at
Lutheran Family Services of Colorado**

**Made possible by a grant from:
The ELCA Foundation Lutheran Services for the Elderly Endowment**

2005-2006

I. The Needs of Caregivers of Older Adults in Faith Communities

Beginning in July of 2003, a church leader training and caregiver education project was undertaken by the Care Management Solutions (CMS) program of Lutheran Family Services of Colorado (LFS). Lutheran Family Services of Colorado is a social ministry organization that includes programs in adoption, foster care, pregnancy counseling, teen pregnancy prevention, disaster response, fostering family strengths, refugee and asylee services, as well as care management services for older adults. This initial project educated clergy and church leaders in 11 smaller congregations about aging and caregiving issues, as well as provided geriatric care management services to older adult members in these congregations. A Wheat Ridge Ministries grant funded this project from 2003-2006.

Evaluation of the initial project by the CMS team determined that although participating clergy felt more knowledgeable about aging and caregiver issues, they still desired help responding to questions and situations raised by adult children, spouses and other loved ones who were members of their congregations. Additionally, an informal study of randomly selected congregations in the Denver area who were not a part of the original project indicated that many clergy were not aware of the number of caregivers there were in their congregations, or how to help them find resources and support in their role as caregivers of older adults. Many did not realize that caregivers, most often adult children or spouses, are a rapidly growing segment of the overall population and, therefore, of their membership as well.

Caregivers, by definition, have a personal relationship with a loved one who is frail or disabled, and offer assistance to such an extent that the caregiver's life is noticeably impacted by that involvement. More than a quarter (26.6%) of the adult population in the United States has provided this kind of care to an older loved one in the past year. The need is clear: rapidly increasing numbers of aging members in congregations and, with that, the need for their family caregivers to become informed about their role and the importance of self-care. This factor, combined with mounting evidence that many church leaders (clergy, parish nurses, Stephen's Ministers, and care team members), have limited training or knowledge in connecting caregivers with resources and support, indicated more education and information needed to be provided in this important area of service.

II. Overview of the Caregiver Awareness Project

A concerted effort to meet the needs identified from the evaluation of the Wheat Ridge Ministries project was initiated by the Care Management Solutions program of LFS. In 2005, a second grant for a two-year project related to caregiving education and awareness was obtained, this time from the ELCA Foundation's Lutheran Services for the Elderly Endowment (LSEE). This project sought to provide a multifaceted approach to enhance the knowledge base and skill set of church leaders in addressing the concerns and needs of caregivers of older adults in their congregations. Also targeted were the caregivers and older adults themselves, to increase their knowledge and skills, and broaden the sphere of

influence within the congregations involved. Ultimately, through education and training of church leaders, caregivers and those older adults needing support, these overall relationships were strengthened.

Education and raising awareness among targeted congregations in the Denver metro area was the first of two basic components of the new project funded by LSEE. The second important component, that of developing substantially revised and expanded Web pages, was undertaken to provide both local and long distance family caregivers of those older adults living in Denver with practical as well as emotional support and resources. These new Web pages include links to helpful local, regional and national agencies and organizations related to aging and caregiving issues. Church leaders, made more aware of the needs of caregivers for older adults, are now able to connect caregivers with the Web site and provide access to the professional services of the Care Management Solutions program of LFS and other appropriate agencies. Additionally, church leaders can find information on the Web site for their own ministry with caregivers and older adult members.

III. Implementation of the Caregiver Awareness Project

A. The Educational Component

Education of church leaders, caregivers and older adults was accomplished by using two basic approaches -- half-day seminars for groups of churches, and presentations to specific groups at individual churches.

1. Seminars were sponsored by larger congregations, with publicity and invitations sent to smaller churches in the surrounding area. The sponsoring congregations either had a past relationship with LFS, or volunteered to be involved after responding to an article on the caregiving seminars that had been printed in denominational newsletters.

Planning for each seminar was conducted by the Project Coordinator in consultation with a committee composed of members from the host congregation. Two or more planning sessions were held in order to choose seminar topics, determine publicity, set the seminar schedule, clarify the registration process, and select resource fair materials for the day of the seminar.

Seminars took place on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. They consisted of six one-hour sessions on different topics of interest and concern to church leaders, caregivers and older adults. There was no charge except for a nominal fee for lunch. Scheduling for the seminars permitted participants to attend four of the six sessions offered (Exhibit A), and included an extensive resource fair which provided helpful take-home materials made available by local and regional service providers.

A sample of topics presented by LFS Care Management Solutions team members were "Time to Move?" "Aging Ain't for Sissies," and "Parent or Child: Which am I?" In addition, elder law attorneys, insurance experts, and representatives from the district attorney's office conducted seminar sessions on advanced directives, long-term care insurance, and identity theft among older adults. The Colorado State Division of

Insurance also offered an excellent speaker on Medicare changes, an important topic at the time that affected many older adults and their caregivers.

2. The second approach for education on caregiving and older adult issues was through presentations to adult Sunday school classes and other mid-week groups at individual churches. These were conducted by LFS Care Management Solutions staff. An annotated list of 16 presentations offered by the staff was made available to committees who were in charge of choosing and scheduling the meetings (Exhibit B).

B. Recruitment of Sponsoring Congregations

Mid-sized or larger Lutheran congregations in different sections of the Denver metro area were targeted for sponsorship of the Saturday seminars, including two congregations who chose to co-sponsor one together. Another sponsorship was initiated by individual parishioners who saw an article placed by LFS in a synod newsletter asking for sponsors. Since “buy-in” on the part of each sponsoring congregation was considered important, an assigned committee then met with the Project Coordinator to plan the event.

Recruitment of congregations for Sunday forums or mid-week presentations was accomplished through contacts with appropriate church committees. In addition, as the outreach in caregiver education became more widely known, LFS received requests for presentations from other congregations, including one church that was part of another denomination.

C. Marketing and Publicity

The Care Management Solutions team of Lutheran Family Services felt it important to go through the church planning committee to market the event within the congregation. These committees not only knew members who would benefit most from the topics presented, but also knew how best to publicize and use the congregation’s network to encourage attendance. We provided a marketing packet which included posters that could be placed in strategic areas of the facility, a suggested article for the church newsletter, bulletin announcements, and an article to be placed in the community newspaper (Exhibit C).

Other congregations near the sponsoring church, as well as nearby agencies such as senior centers and selected retirement communities, were invited to participate in the Saturday seminars. The marketing packet was mailed to them, and committee members were encouraged to make contact personally as well.

Brightly colored posters were an important part of the packet. Church bulletin boards are often crowded with notices, and it was felt that materials marketing the seminars needed to be prominent in order to attract attention. Designing these ‘in-house’ and having them reproduced at a local copy center kept the costs manageable.

D. The Program’s Web Pages

The second major component of the project was the significant redesign and expansion of the CMS pages on the agency’s Web site that emphasizes not only the CMS program services for older adults, but also the program’s focus on the well-being of caregivers. One of the primary purposes of the redesign was to provide resources and encouragement

for long distance caregivers, those living outside of the metro Denver area, away from their older loved one. The site also provides information for church leaders to assist them in their ministry to caregiver parishioners.

Although the final look and layout of the Web pages was not within CMS staff purview due to an overall agency Web site re-design, the content clearly highlights caregiver needs along with those of the older adult, as evidenced by the title of the page, “Caring for Older Adults.” To view the full content of the caregiver pages, access the Lutheran Family Services of Colorado Web site at www.lfsc.org. The CMS Web pages benefited from a mass mailing by the agency announcing its new overall Web site; in addition, ads were placed in “The Lutheran” magazine for two consecutive months, to inform long distance caregivers of services available to them on the Care Management Solutions portion of the LFS Website.

IV. Evaluation of the Caregiver Awareness Project

A. The Educational Effort

Many positive results emerged from the seminars and other presentations. Written evaluations and oral comments consistently and overwhelmingly indicated that participants felt they learned a great deal, were better able to address issues, and felt more confident about where to turn for help. Even though some participants did not have an immediate need, many said they felt reassured, enlightened, and empowered to face pending issues of caregiving and aging.

Typical statements by *church leaders* who participated in educational events were:

“I feel it was very beneficial, among the strongest of the programs in our congregation.”

“The seminars and forums presented at our congregation were excellent. They hit home and were very useful for the people.”

“It was to the point, practical – something we need in terms of doing ministry.”

“It helped relieve some of the anxiety and pressure being experienced by adult children and members.”

“As a parish nurse I learned so much and gained a great deal of valuable information on resources.”

Typical statements by *congregation members* attending presentations were:

“There is someone out there who cares.”

“Counseling is more available than I thought.”

“It was great to talk over problems we all have and find or hear of solutions and resources.”

“I learned how to open up the topic of aging with my children.”

“It helped stimulate further awareness of caregiver/care receiver issues and gave practical ways to explore meeting needs.”

Evaluations suggested that in the future, pastors be asked for names of parishioners in their congregation who might have a specific interest in caregiving for older adults. These members could then be invited to participate in planning the seminars, along with

the committee. Most pastors and church leaders have substantial claims on their time, and it is often a lay person within the congregation – motivated by personal experience or concern – who will promote such a valuable program.

The weekend seminars were sometimes a “mixed bag.” They required considerable effort to organize, publicize and conduct. As is often the case, success most often depended on the effectiveness and motivation of the committee from the host congregation. If they enthusiastically endorsed the event and worked hard to promote it, attendance reflected that effort. With the multitude of activities and events vying for attention, a half-day weekend seminar was somewhat difficult to ‘sell.’ There were anywhere from 25-80 participants at each seminar; the time and effort of securing presenters, organizing and conducting the event must be balanced with the number of people who attend.

In contrast, participants at the individual presentations often numbered 25-35 at each session, even though only one topic was presented. Two or three of these presentations gained as wide an audience as the lowest attended seminar, and were easier to arrange. This setting also allowed individual caregivers to approach the LFS care manager for further help and information, something that was not as easily done at the seminars. The disadvantage is that only one topic was presented, compared to six topics offered at each weekend seminar.

B. The New Web Site

During the first eleven months the new LFS Web site was operative (January – November, 2006) there were 3428 requested pages or downloads for the Care Management Solutions portion of the Web site. The downloads include the African American caregiver brochure, the listing of presentations available, and “Caring with Grace,” the general brochure for the CMS program. Visits to individual sections within the Care Management Solutions pages, such as “Long Distance Caregiving,” and “Using the Internet to find help,” were also recorded. The one aspect that has received minimal response has been the feedback form visitors were asked to complete before leaving the site, which has made it difficult to gather data regarding users of the site.

V. Conclusion

Older adults are now able to remain in their homes for a longer period of time, due not only to more community resources, but also to the substantial assistance of caregiving family members. As faith communities look at ways to respond to the “graying” of their congregations, they must examine what it means to support those caregiving loved ones who also sit in their pews. There are significant challenges in increasing awareness about issues of aging, the resources available, and support for the caregivers of older adults within our faith communities. Many of these family caregivers do not know where to go for resources and support, and feel increasingly stressed as they add this role to an already hectic life.

Unfortunately, clergy and other church leaders are not always aware of the significant number of caregivers in their congregations, and if they are, are often uncertain as to how to best support them. Understandably, they also struggle to commit personally to

educational programs that will better inform them, due to their already heavy work load in the church. This likely explains why the project had more success in attracting parishioners to its events than clergy and church leaders.

Most likely to attend the educational programs of the project were active caregivers and older adults – some of whom were caregiving spouses. They understood the importance of the topics, because they were already experiencing the reality and pressures of everyday caregiving and care receiving, and tended to rate the events highly. The director of the Care Management Solutions program of Lutheran Family Services of Colorado, Luci Draayer, stated it succinctly, “...most people remain somewhat oblivious to these issues until they face them in some way themselves.”

Another significant challenge is educating family members so that they “self-identify” as caregivers. Many regularly perform tasks that enable an older loved one to remain at home (grocery shopping, cleaning, transportation, lawn care), yet fail to recognize that they are already in the “throes of caregiving.” Acknowledging this role is necessary if one is to maintain perspective with all of the other demands of life. Faith communities have a unique opportunity to affirm and support their members who have added this role to their many other responsibilities.

Finally, since starting the initial effort three years ago, the number of people calling the Care Management Solutions program at LFS for information and referral – or to request actual care management services – has doubled, with an increasing number of callers indicating they were referred through a church connection. The CMS staff attribute this response directly to increased presence in the congregations, and to increased efforts to educate church leaders and members.

This project, funded by the ELCA Foundation’s Lutheran Services for the Elderly Endowment, shows the ongoing need to enlighten church leaders and parishioners about the impact that aging and/or caregiving issues can have in one’s life. Spiritual care must not only be given to older adults, but also to their loved ones who often sacrifice much in their caregiving role. Increasing both knowledge and awareness about these issues will be critical if the church is to be an effective leader in serving our aging society.

For more information about this project, contact the Care Management Solutions Program of Lutheran Family Services of Colorado at 303-922-3433, or www.caremanagement@lfsco.org.

Exhibit A

Sample of Topics and Seminar Schedule

“Living with HOPE”

Six workshops for church leaders, caregivers of older adults and older adults

“Medicare: Changes are Immanent and They will Affect You!” Important changes are coming. How they will affect you or the older adult in your life. Understand what they are and how to deal with them.

Presenter: Robert Pierce, Colorado Senior Health Insurance Assistance

“Filling the Caregiver Toolbox: Respite and Resources” Especially for those who are caregivers for a spouse, parent or other older adult. The dynamics and challenges facing caregivers, including helpful resources and responses. *Presenter: Luci Draayer, MSW, LCSW – Director Care Management Solutions, Lutheran Family Services of Colorado*

“Memory Loss: Is it Happening or not, and What Should I do?” What’s “normal aging,” and what may be a sign of memory loss? Several things can cause dementia, including strokes and other diseases, of which Alzheimer’s is the most common. Deepen your understanding of memory loss and actions you can take. *Presenter: Sherron Slavens – Alzheimer’s Association of Colorado*

“The Medical-Spiritual Connection: Beyond Medications and Treatments” Presented by a retired medical doctor who has remained active in the field of medical ethics. This session includes ethical and spiritual decisions involved in “letting go,” from the perspective of family, patient and physician. *Presenter: Jim Karel (MD) Former president, Denver Medical Society, currently volunteer Chaplain, Hospice of St. John*

“Aging Ain’t for Sissies!” Aging viewed as “organic, humorous, the enemy, and the continuation of a life-long process.” Some reasons why “aging ain’t for sissies,” but if it isn’t, then who is it for?

Presenter: Mary K. Kennedy, MSW, LCSW – Geriatric Care Manager, Lutheran Family Services of Colorado

“Safety and Mobility for Older Adults” As we live longer, mobility and safety may become more difficult, and influence our ability to remain in our homes. What can be done to maintain mobility and safety in the home? *Presenter: Nathan Colburn, Owner – Accessible Systems, Inc.*

Seminar Schedule

- 8:30-8:55 Sign-in, coffee, Resource Fair (Parish Hall)
- 9:00-9:10 Welcome and Announcements
Pastor Bruce Hermann, King of Glory Lutheran Church (Parish Hall)
- 9:15-10:15 Session I Workshops: **Safety and Mobility** (Antioch Room)
Aging Ain't for Sissies (Sanctuary Room)
Filling the Caregiver Toolbox (Parish Hall)
- 10:30-11:30 Session II Workshops: **Safety and Mobility** (Antioch Room)
Aging Ain't for Sissies (Sanctuary Room)
Filling the Caregiver Toolbox (Parish Hall)
- 11:30-12:15 Lunch and Resource Fair (Parish Hall)
- 12:15-1:15 Session III Workshops: **Memory Loss** (Antioch Room)
Future of Medicare (Sanctuary Room)
Medical-Spiritual Connection (Parish Hall)
- 1:30-2:30 Session IV Workshops: **Memory Loss** (Antioch Room)
Future of Medicare (Sanctuary Room)
Medical-Spiritual Connection (Parish Hall)

Exhibit B

Presentations made available to planning committees

(Presentations Available by the Care Management Solutions Program of Lutheran Family Services of Colorado)

Aging Ain't for Sissies

Perspectives on aging: Aging as “organic,” “humorous,” “the enemy”, “continuation of a lifelong endeavor.” Some reasons why “aging ain’t for sissies” and if it isn’t, then who is it for?

Caregiving: The Basics and What You Need to Know

With 80% of the care of older adults being provided not by institutions but by family members, family caregivers need help in understanding their basic roles, and how to accomplish them.

Caregiver Stress and Self Care

A recent study by the National Alliance of Caregivers and AARP concluded caregivers of older adults are a population at risk. “Many caregivers are depressed, and they feel isolated and burdened. Their physical and mental health is worse than that of the general adult population and their health status shows classic symptoms of stress.” How you can deal with this problem.

Communicating Effectively with Health Care Professionals

Whether you are a caregiver for your parent(s), a spouse or other older adult, knowing how to talk with doctors and other medical professionals is extremely important. Some key aspects of that important dialogue and how to go about it.

Eldercare and Work: Finding the Balance

A recent National Alliance of Caregivers, AARP study found Caregivers of older adults average 18 hours of caregiving weekly, and nearly two-thirds of them worked and had to make work adjustments because of their caregiving responsibilities. Something has to give: How to find a balance.

Everyday Creativity

For Older Adults and Caregivers: Changing Perspective and Turning Problems into Opportunities. A video and presentation centered on tapping your own creativity in facing changes that often come your way uninvited.

Facts and Benefits of Caregiving, Locally or Long Distance

What caregivers of older adult parents or relatives experience, the rewards and challenges. Helpful suggestions about how to get help in caring for an older adult who is nearby or at a distance, in another city or state.

Grieving Well: New Perspectives

This presentation helps participants better understand how loss affects them, including various cultural dynamics and how they may influence one’s grieving.

What grievors need most, and suggestions for exploring personal grief strategies are discussed.

Understanding Physical, Mental and Emotional Changes in Older Adults

At every age it helps to understand what others are experiencing. Older adults are often dealing with their own special set of transitions. Knowing these can often be helpful in resolving caregiver issues and foster healthy aging.

Reminiscence: Completing Life's Tapestry

Reviewing the past is not just a common characteristic of older adults; it can be a helpful and necessary exercise in tying the bits and pieces of life together.

Aging and Spirituality: Self Care of the Soul

"For everything there is a season" has special implications for older adults, who often move into a special time of examining purpose and meaning.

Snake or Scorpion: Making Difficult Decisions in Caregiving for Older Adults

There is an ancient Egyptian proverb that states: "Because we focused on the snake, we missed the scorpion." Why making good decisions with older adults is so vital. Important considerations for the process.

The Blues: Not a Normal Part of Aging

Myths, misunderstanding and misinformation about depression in older adults. Increase your understanding about symptoms and when to seek treatment.

Caregiving for Older Adults Made Easier: Using a Geriatric Care Manager

Assessing the overall care needs of an older adult requires an expertise and experience most caregivers do not have. Equally daunting is the task of locating and sorting through the maze of services and resources, and then monitoring their effectiveness once selected. Learn how professional Geriatric Care Managers can help and how to choose one.

Time for an Older Adult to Move?

Often one of the most difficult decisions in the life of an older adult and those who care for them, what are the issues and considerations and how does one approach and ease this major transition in life?

Who Am I – Parent or Child? Especially for Adult Children

Is there a really a role reversal? Should there be one? Suggestions for how to look at the caregiving relationship with your parent.

Exhibit C
Publicity Packet Samples



“Aging with *Hope*”

A day of workshops for older adults and caregivers

Saturday, October 15, 2005

Presented by:

**The Care Management Solutions Program of
Lutheran Family Services of Colorado and
*Atonement, Mt. Calvary and Trinity Lutheran Churches***

**Made possible by a grant from:
*ELCA Foundation Lutheran Services for the Elderly Endowment***

Suggested letter sent to nearby churches inviting their participation at the seminar.

Dear Pastor _____

May I ask your help in publicizing an event that will be of special interest to those in your congregation who are caregivers for older adults, especially adult children and older adult spouses, or church leaders such as parish nurses and Stephen's ministers?

Lutheran Family Services of Colorado is presenting a series of six *free* workshops, offered by professionals in aging concerns and caregiver issues. This seminar is made possible by a grant from ELCA Foundation Lutheran Services for the Elderly Endowment.

The event will also feature a Resource Fair of information and services available from area and state agencies. It will take place on _____ at _____. No pre-registration is required.

Aging with HOPE is open to all and there is no charge. A \$5 lunch is optional.

Eighty percent of all care received by older adults is *not* provided by "institutions," or care facilities. It is provided by family members, and research shows these caregivers experience depression at three times the rate of others in their own age group, often because they feel isolated and don't know where to find resources to help.

Included in this packet are publicity materials for the **Aging with HOPE** seminar, including color and black and white posters and a list of workshops offered.

Thank you for helping us reach out to provide support and resources for the older adults and caregivers in your church. Should you have any questions, I can be reached at _____.

Suggested article for church newsletter, to publicize the seminar.

Aging with HOPE, a special workshop for church leaders, caregivers of older adults, and older adults.

Eighty percent of all care received by older Americans is *not* provided by “institutions” or care facilities. It is provided by family members – adult children, spouses, grandchildren and other relatives – people just like you! A recent Robert Wood Johnson study concluded, “Caregivers are a population at risk. Many caregivers are depressed, and they feel isolated and burdened. Their physical and mental health is worse than that of the general adult population and their health status shows classic symptoms of stress.” They need help in knowing how to care for themselves and finding resources to help them care for their loved ones.

What is our congregational outreach to older members, and how effective is it? Should it be more than visits to the elderly? Local congregations need to develop outreach ministries *to families* with older members. In addition, they need programs for members who become long-distance caregivers, a group whose number is expected to double over the next 15 years.

_____ Lutheran Church is taking steps to provide that outreach ministry to caregivers and older adult members. In cooperation with the Care Management Solutions program of Lutheran Family Services of Colorado, we are sponsoring a Saturday Seminar, ***Aging With Hope***, to help church leaders and caregivers of older adults, as well as older adults themselves, understand the needs and issues involved, and to assist them in locating and acquiring the help they need. There is no cost for this seminar and it will take place on _____. Call the church office for more information and registration details.