

Caregiver Chronicles

February 2017



AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF DANE COUNTY
2865 N SHERMAN AVE, MADISON, WI 53704
608-261-9930
[HTTPS://AAA.DCDHS.COM/](https://aaa.dcdhs.com/)



Photo by Jane De Broux

*Caregiving often calls us to lean into love
we didn't know possible*

—Tia Walker, author

Don't Venture Out on Thin Ice



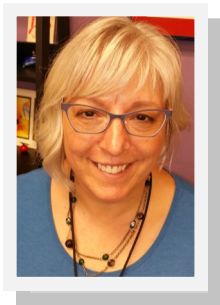
Photo by Jane De Broux

My niece from the South was visiting and we took her on a whirlwind tour around Madison last weekend. We stopped on campus to show her the famed UW-Madison Terrace overlooking a frozen Lake Mendota. She was amazed, never having seen a frozen lake before, and wanted to walk out onto the ice. It was a cold Sunday morning, and it was quiet and devoid of people except a few hardy folks who had come for a kite skiing lesson. A man in heavy snow gear and goggles approached us near the ramp to the frozen lake. He told us he was the instructor for the ice skiing lesson about to take place. Then he told us to be sure not to cross onto the ice any place other than where we could use the ramp. He explained that the ice near the rock retaining wall was the thinnest and, as the water moved under the ice and came toward shore, the action of the incoming waves against the rocks resulted in untrustworthy ice. The driver of a recreational vehicle had attempted to make his way onto the ice the day before and had immediately broken through.

There are times when those of us who are caregivers find ourselves in tough situations. Certainly, there are many stories of love and reward in caregiving but that's not always the case. There can also be situations fraught with hardship, exhaustion, and stress. I encourage caregivers to seek out help and support before they take a chance venturing out on thin ice. Support groups, grants, educational programs, information and referrals—all of these can help build a ramp to ensure you won't fall through the cracks.

What happens once you're out on the frozen lake? Perhaps, like those kite skiers, you can harness the wind and glide over the safer areas.

If you need help navigating your caregiving journey, please don't go it alone. Help is available through the Dane County Caregiving Program. We're waiting to hear from you.



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Love Comes in Many Forms

February is traditionally the month associated with love. While chocolate, roses, and cupid come to mind, I'd like to share four real-life stories that I believe illustrate true love lived out every day by families I've had the privilege to meet and serve as Family Caregiver Specialist in Fond du Lac County (names in the article have been changed). Two of the caregivers fulfilled their vow, "in sickness and in health" despite difficult circumstances. The other two caregivers are an adult child and another relative who accepted the role of caring for an aging loved one.

When I first met **Louis and Harriet**, he had already been caring for her a number of years due to her progressive Parkinson's disease. As with every disease, each person is affected differently, but Harriet had been at an advanced stage for quite a while. Louis had attentively provided all of her daily care, including bathing and feeding her. They were both so appreciative when arrangements were made for someone to come and give Harriet a bath through the caregiver program. It was wonderful to witness Louis's gentle manner as he spoke to Harriet. Although she was not able to respond verbally, they definitely connected in their communication with one another.



Bonnie and Leo had been hard-working partners on their family farm for many years, so when Leo was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Bonnie appeared to ease into her role as his care partner. She made it look easy but, as all caregivers know, the adjustment is a challenge. Bonnie took on new responsibilities that Leo had always handled in the past and she even surprised herself with what she was capable of doing. This quote from Hoosier Farmer was posted on their refrigerator door:

"Love is the thing that enables a woman to sing while she mops up the floor after her husband has walked across it in his barn boots."

They both had a good sense of humor and a strong faith that definitely helped get them through the most challenging circumstances.



Looking back, **Melinda** had recognized the signs of dementia in her mom, **Trudy**, a number of years prior. She had been filling in the gap for her mom's gradually-diminishing ability to complete a sentence on her own and care for the house that she had always kept immaculate. As many of us do, Melinda respected and honored Trudy's desire to stay independent and to live alone in her home. It later became apparent the issue needed to be addressed when her mom got lost one day on a walk and the local police brought her home. Melinda and her family, with Trudy's input, made the decision to have her come and live with them. Although it has been an adjustment for all of them, Melinda says it has become a wonderful learning experience for her own children as well. The kids have witnessed the compassion their mom and dad showed in caring for Grandma and have learned to have more patience when they need their parents' attention. They also have fun playing Wii bowling with their Grammy T!



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Sharon was always close to her uncle, **Harry**. When the elderly bachelor's health made it impossible for him to live alone, she brought Harry to live with her and her husband. Fortunately, Sharon was able to keep working due to the availability of an Adult Day Service program while she was at work. Harry loved going there and the staff enjoyed him as well. He had a number of issues that made him physically dependent on others, but Harry was still mentally sharp and they were able to have many interesting conversations with him.



The loyalty and devotion that these families and many others have demonstrated in their caregiving situations are an inspiration to me. Many of their days have not been easy, and there certainly are times that are complicated and challenging, but they remain dedicated to the care of their loved ones. No relationship is perfect, everyone has disagreements and difficulties, but it truly is heartening to witness when people are committed to one another.

Each of these situations is unique but they have something in common. In their own time, each family came to realize that reaching out and asking for help and support was a good thing.

This article appears courtesy of Lori Anderson, Family Caregiver Specialist, Fond du Lac County. It has been lightly edited from its original form.

Online Resources

Essential Tax Steps for Caregivers. Find out what you need before you file and avoid stress by sorting out financial affairs in advance with these helpful steps from AgingCare.com: <http://bit.ly/2jQlqDU>

“Fighting Ageism and Unfair Treatment in Health Care,” by Terry Fulmer

Next Avenue, December 27, 2016

“Everyone deserves equal treatment—in the broader society and in our health care system. Today, older people are often not treated fairly and do not get the care they deserve, simply because of their age. While one of our great success stories in the 20th century was the stunning gain in human longevity, recent research from [The Frameworks Institute](#), funded by my group, The John A. Hartford Foundation, and others, has found that the majority of us still don't recognize ageism or its deleterious effects.”

<http://www.nextavenue.org/fighting-ageism-health-system/>

More on ageism in healthcare from the *Journal of the American Society on Aging*

<http://www.asaging.org/blog/not-doctors-only-ageism-healthcare>

The Grandparent's and Other Relative Caregiver's Guide to Raising Children with Disabilities
Generations United

This comprehensive guide seeks to answer some of the most often asked questions from grandfamilies that include children with disabilities <http://bit.ly/2jQQEHU>



Grand Love

When we think of caregivers, many of us probably think of a spouse caring for their spouse or a child caring for their parent. As our world continues to spin and change, some roles tend to change—even go in reverse! This is especially true for grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren. When parents are absent or unable to raise their children, grandparents are often the ones who step in and raise them.



Raising a second generation brings many rewards, like giving your grandchildren a sense of security and making a real difference in your grandchild's life, but it also brings some challenges. No matter how much you love your grandchild, taking them into your home requires many major adjustments such as finding the right support systems. The following are some helpful tips that could be useful in your day-to-day experiences with your grandchild.

Acknowledge Your Feelings

The simple prospect of raising your grandchild is bound to trigger a variety of emotions—positive and negative—and that's normal. The love you feel for your grandchild and the joy of seeing them grow are positive emotions that you may feel. Negative emotions such as guilt, resentment, or fear are difficult to admit, but feeling and admitting them doesn't minimize the love you have for your grandchild. If you start to feel overwhelmed, remember that you may not have the energy you did when you were younger, but you do have the wisdom that comes with experience. You are at an advantage—you've done this before and learned from your mistakes! Don't ever underestimate what you have to offer.

Create a Stable Environment

Children thrive in stable and predictable environments. While it may take your grandchild some time to adjust, there are steps you can take to make the transition easier. Routines make the world feel safe so establish a routine for mealtimes and bedtimes. Also, encourage your grandchild's input in their new home. Let them decorate their room—they will feel more control of themselves and their environment. Set clear, age-appropriate rules that are enforced consistently.

Encourage Open Communication

It is essential to truly listen to your grandchild and to encourage honest and open communication. In difficult times, they need an adult they can go to for questions, concerns, and feelings. Plan regular times to sit down and talk with your grandchild (without the distraction of TV and electronics). Encourage the child to talk about their feelings and listen without judging or dismissing their feelings. Remember: it's okay to say "I don't know"—you don't have to have an answer for everything.

There is No Shame in Asking for Help

Finding a local support group, church community, or good friends can have a tremendous positive impact on your family. In Dane County, contact Ethel Dunn at the Rainbow Project, 608-238-8751 or sedun2@sbcglobal.net for information on support groups and programs for Grandfamilies. For more information on Spanish Language support for Latino Grandparents in Madison, contact Roderigo Valdivia, 608-243-5252 or rvaldivia@nescoinc.org.

Article Courtesy of Marina Wittmann, Aging Program Specialist, Sauk County.

Events to Enjoy Together

Willy Street Chamber Players

FREE Winter Concert



sponsored by:
North/Eastside
SENIOR
Coalition



Sunday, February 19 at Noon

Warner Park Community Recreation Center

1625 Northport Drive

PROGRAM TO INCLUDE:

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart:** String Quartet K. 157 in C Major
- Felix Mendelssohn** Four Pieces for String Quartet
- Daniel Bernard Roumain** String Quartet No. 5 "Rosa Parks"

WSCP is excited to present this program combining the old with the new. Names familiar to classical music fans (Mozart and Mendelssohn) will be played alongside an exciting work written in 2005 by composer Daniel Bernard Roumain. Roumain's String Quartet No. 5 subtitled "Rosa Parks" is an emotional, exciting work honoring "the mother of the freedom movement."



Photo by Jane De Broux

The Aging and Disability Resource

Center of Dane County (ADRC)

The ADRC offers free, unbiased information and assistance on resources and services for older people and adults with disabilities. Staff provides information to all callers regardless of their income, assets, age, or disability, and they help callers identify options, solve problems, and plan for the future.

Open 7:45 am—4:30 pm Monday through Friday



Call (608) 240-7400

Visit the ADRC office, 2865 N. Sherman Ave, Madison

Appointments are not necessary

Website: www.daneadrc.org

Email: ADRC@countyofdane.com

Alzheimer's and Dementia-specific Information

7th Annual Solomon Carter Fuller Memory Screening Day

Mind Over Matter: Healthy Cognitive Aging with an Emphasis on African American Men

A community discussion about dementia and Alzheimer's disease
featuring Dr. Keith Whitfield

**24-25
FEBRUARY
2017**



Friday, February 24, 2017 | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Mt. Zion Baptist Church
2019 Fisher Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53713
Reception to follow.
Free and open to the public.

Dr. Keith Whitfield

Provost of Wayne State University and
expert on aging among African Americans

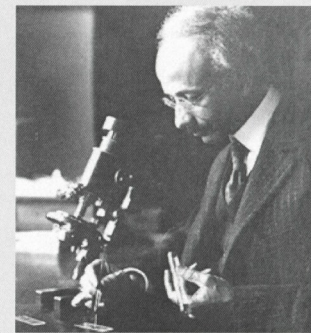
Alzheimer's Workshops and Confidential Memory Screenings

Saturday, February 25, 2017
Urban League of Greater Madison
2222 South Park Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53713

Schedule:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. | Caregiving Panel Discussion |
| 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. | Caregiver Workshops on
Elder Financial Abuse and Mental Illness |
| 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Memory Screenings
(last screening at 2:15 p.m.) |

Free and open to the public. To schedule a memory screening call 608.232.3400 or email charlie.daniel@alzisc.org. Last appointment of the day will be at 2:15 p.m. Walk-in appointments are available.



Solomon Carter Fuller
Memory Screening
Day is held each year
during Black History
Month and celebrates
Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller,
a pioneer in Alzheimer's
disease research and
the first African American
psychiatrist.

Sponsored by:



Visit us online at www.adrc.wisc.edu

Caring for the Caregiver Program

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Save paper and reduce postage costs

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- You are willing to receive the newsletter via email
- You are no longer interested in receiving the newsletter

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