

Caregiver Chronicles

July 2020

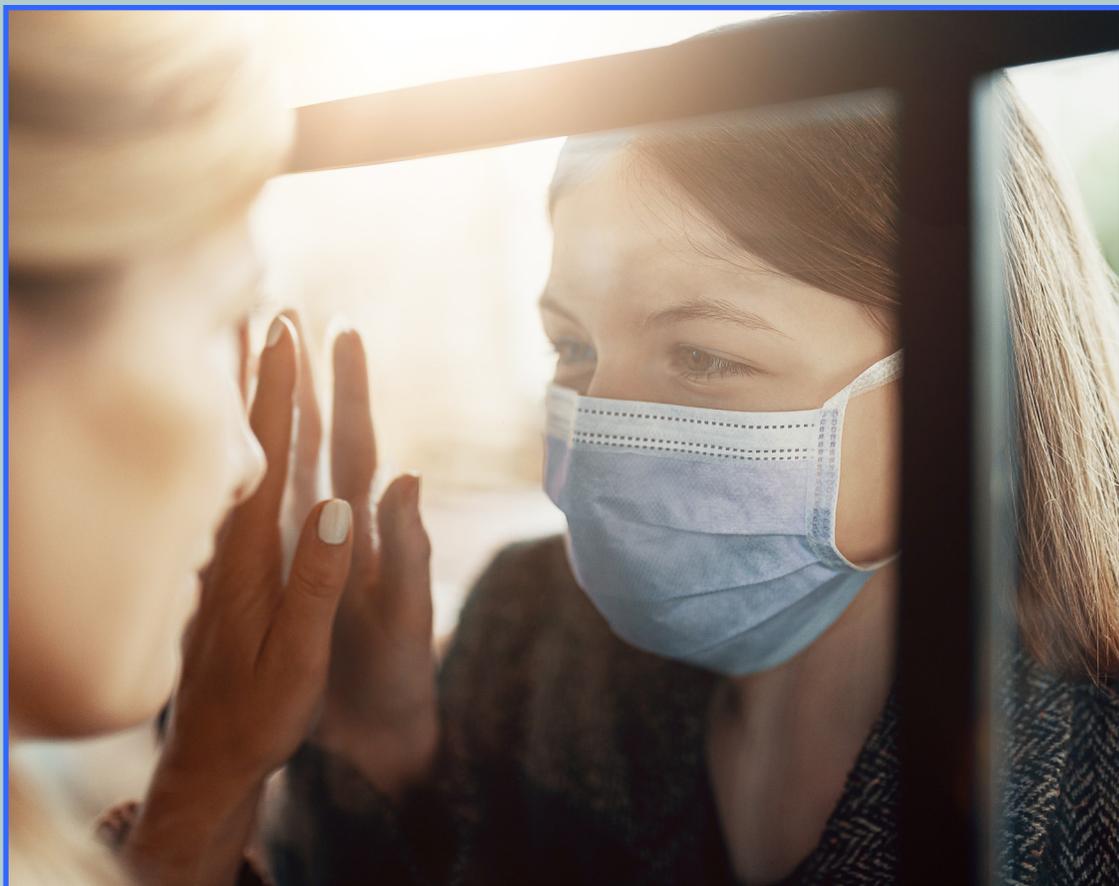


Caring for Caregivers

AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF DANE COUNTY
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608-261-9930

The willingness to show up changes us, it makes us a little braver each time.

—*Brené Brown, PhD, LMSW*
Professor, Lecturer, author, and podcast host



Staying Strong with Caregiver Support

The Brene Brown quote on the cover of this issue spoke to my experience. I have found that when I show up to do anything that is challenging or difficult it changes me. It makes it easier to do the next time and helps me move toward personal and professional goals. The rest of the quote says, “If you show up in life, the Universe will reward your efforts. The more you push through fear, inadequacy, or doubt the more courage you will build.” Certainly in the time of COVID-19 we could use support pushing through fear and doubt and more courage to continue doing what is needed to keep people safe. Caregivers have the additional stress of responsibility for the health and safety of the most vulnerable among us. It’s stressful in the best of times so caregiver support is more important than ever. How to focus on the ability to show up for ourselves and others is outlined in “Show Up for You and for Them” (page 3).

If you are inspired to seek out a variety of ways to nurture your care partner and yourself you will find a wealth of resources in the Area Agency on Aging of Dane County’s [Social Isolation Resource Guide](#) compiled and edited by Alyce Miller, MS, RDN, CD, Registered Dietitian and Healthy Aging Coordinator. Additional contributions to the guide came from the Greater Wisconsin Area Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) and the Dane County Focal Points (which include our local senior centers). The guide (page 4) helps readers find options to address physical health, mental health, and emotional needs. It also provides connections for creativity, entertainment, and fun.

In this issue of *Caregiver Chronicles* you will also find updated information on farmers’ market vouchers for seniors (page 4); how to make caregiving easier and your care partner more independent with assistive devices (“Assistive Devices Can Help You!” by OAA Consultant, Jane Mahoney of GWAAR on page 5); upcoming Caregiver Teleconnection topics for July (page 6); and information on safer shopping for FoodShare households from MIPPA Program Coordinator Leilani Amundson (page 7).

Last but not least, please take care to maintain mask wearing and social distancing over the July 4th holiday. Help to avoid a spike in COVID-19 cases.

Stay safe and don’t hesitate to call or email if you need help.



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The logo for "Caring for Caregivers" features a red heart outline to the left of the text "Caring for Caregivers" in a serif font.



Show Up for You and for Them

As the COVID-19 pandemic wears on it continues to wear on all of us. Staying home was something we did to help slow the spread of the virus and to avoid overwhelming our healthcare system. However, the nation-wide efforts that followed to reopen the economy have been a mixed bag. It is discouraging that all that sacrifice early on hasn't yielded the results we'd hoped for in terms of creating a new normal that allows us to get back to much of what we treasure and depend on in life. In the face of this kind of disruption, there is some temptation to withdraw, give up, or, worse yet, to throw all caution to the wind. I don't remember a time when I was less able to anticipate how to prepare for what comes next. So, given these extraordinary circumstances, showing up is more than keeping us from slowing to a halt. It's also an act of faith. Faith in ourselves, in those we love, and in our communities. Faith that together we can get through to a new type of normalcy—hopefully even better than before in many ways. But that will require us all to show up each day until that day arrives.

In order to show up for one another, we must first show up for ourselves. What does it mean to show up for yourself? From a mental health perspective, it's about making your own needs a priority. It involves finding time for self care no matter how busy things are caring for others, in our work, and in our lives in general.

Where to begin? Take an honest assessment of where you are without judgement. Current times provide an opportunity to avoid focusing on what others will never notice. All the jokes about appearing on Zoom in pajama bottoms point to the fact that some things we had been doing can now take a back seat. Of course, other things have become more difficult—getting groceries, helping educate children at home, and caring for our older adults and loved ones with disabilities safely. Take advantage of dropping anything that doesn't matter right now and shift priorities where you can. Then reach out for help and support when you need it.

Carve out time for yourself each day to do something enjoyable that will boost your energy. Take a nap in a hammock, do some artwork, try a new craft, call an old friend. Schedule that time and make it a habit because when you show up for yourself, good things start to happen. You make new connections, people reach out to you, and opportunities start to present themselves.

To help you get started, you may like “An Illustrated Guide To Showing Up For Yourself,” on NPR's *Life Kit* podcast with Shreen Marisol Meraji. You can listen to the 59-minute episode [here](#). If you're looking to support someone else you may like the next episode of the podcast, “What To Say When A Friend Is Struggling.” You can listen to the 13-minute episode [here](#).

For help with more strategies to show up for yourself you can always contact me at the Dane County Caregiver Program. I am here to listen and connect you to resources that can support you.

—Jane De Broux, Caregiver Program Coordinator
Area Agency on Aging of Dane County

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Seniors Farmers' Market Vouchers Still Available

Due to COVID-19, distribution of farmers' market vouchers will be predominantly through mail. The Area Agency on Aging of Dane County offers vouchers to older adults (age 60+) for use in purchasing \$25 worth of fruit, vegetables, or herbs at farmers' markets and roadside farm stands in Wisconsin during the 2020 season (1 June-30 October 2020). The vouchers are distributed on a first come/first serve basis to Dane County to those 60 or older with gross incomes under \$23,606 per year (or \$1,968/month) for a one-person household and \$31,894 (or \$2,658/month) for a two-person household. One set of vouchers per household regardless of household size.

Past participants will receive an application in the mail along with instructions for this year's program. For those who have never participated in the program and wish to apply, contact AAA Dietitian Alyce Miller (608-261-5678). Vouchers and applications will be distributed via mail until September 30 or while supplies last.

We are monitoring the situation as COVID-19 continues. For the most current information on farmers' market vouchers, contact your local senior services center or Alyce Miller at (608) 261-5678. Updates will also be made on Area Agency on Aging's website: <https://aaa.dcdhs.com/COVID-19.aspx>

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Social Isolation Resource Guide

During the original *Safer At Home* orders it became clear that social isolation would become a serious challenge—particularly for older adults and their caregivers, who found themselves living under the strictest rules of social distancing due to the risk level associated with COVID-19. Today we are still not in a place we would like to be; one that would allow more social contact with vulnerable people. Yet, we must balance the human needs and mental health of individuals and the need to keep people safe and save lives. Although it is not the same as being in physical contact, there are a number of excellent opportunities to address health, wellness, and the need to connect with others in the Area Agency on Aging of Dane County's [Social Isolation Resource Guide](#) compiled and edited by Alyce Miller, MS, RDN, CD, Registered Dietitian and Healthy Aging Coordinator. Additional contributions to the guide came from the Greater Wisconsin Area Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) and the Dane County Focal Points (which include our local senior centers).

While some of the resources are specific to professionals who work with older adults and their caregivers, most are also appropriate to anyone who wants to combat social isolation and loneliness in older adults. Categories for resources include Physical Activity (workouts, wellness challenges and trackers, and classes tailored to older adults from yoga to fitness to strength training); Brain Health (games and trivia, printable brain teasers, guided meditations, classes and apps for mental health); Entertainment Resources (coloring books to download and print, free music and theater performances, virtual tours, and films); Positivity (student hotline for isolated older adults and other tools for boosting mental health); and Social Connections (opportunities for social engagement and calls to seniors by volunteers, book clubs, pen pal programs, and online communities). There are also additional resources caregivers will find helpful.

The guide is updated as new material is contributed. If you have questions or would like to share a resource contact Alyce Miller at 608-261-5678 or miller.alyce@countyofdane.com.

Assistive Devices Can Help You!

The life of a caregiver can be incredibly busy. When your loved one needs help with daily living tasks such as dressing, grooming, walking, and eating, a lot of time and energy is consumed by these tasks alone. Add doctor appointments, medication management, housekeeping, grocery shopping, cooking, and laundry to that and you wonder how to get it all done. And, it's nice to have some quality time left to share with your loved one—not to mention time to take care of your own needs!

When there are so many things to do, assistance of any kind makes the day go smoother. Asking friends, relatives, and neighbors for help is one great solution but, with social distancing in place, this may not be an option. Another way of making your caregiving tasks more manageable is to use assistive devices. An assistive device can be a tool, a piece of equipment, or a product that helps a person with an activity they might not otherwise be able to do on their own. One example is using a weighted fork for a person with tremors. When using regular silverware the person may need to be fed but the weighted fork reduces the tremors allowing them to eat on their own. Assistive devices can make completing tasks easier for the caregiver and it allows the person being cared for to do things more independently, which can be important to their mental health.

There are many assistive devices that can help people complete daily living tasks independently. It can be as simple as using adhesive-backed foam dots to mark the wash cycle on the washing machine knob to help a care partner continue that task on their own. Other items include larger pieces of equipment like raised toilet seats. Some just take a little creativity. Common items like a long-handled reacher, a back scratcher, and a jar opener have obvious benefits but there are also products you may not have seen or considered. Here is a list of items to address some common activities:

Mobility/transferring – swivel seat cushion, furniture risers, ceiling-mounted pole

Eating – plate guard, weighted forks, forks with grips

Cooking – suction-cup brushes, rocking T-knife

Bathing/dressing – sock aid, shampoo trays

Medication – talking pill bottle

Recreation – lighted magnifying glass, extra-large playing cards, pocket talker

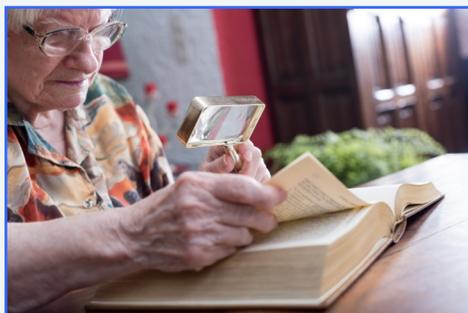
General safety – three-prong plug with helper, non-skid tape

Wandering protection – door posters, door alarms, adaptive doorknobs

An assistive device may be just the thing you need to make your role as a caregiver a little easier. For more help with assistive devices contact your [local senior center](#), Caregiver Program, or ADRC.

—Jane Mahoney, OAA Consultant

Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources





CAREGIVER TELECONNECTION



www.caregiverteleconnection.org

Telephone Learning Sessions



Date	Time	Topic	A LEADING VOICE FOR CAREGIVERS
Wednesday, July 1st.	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	COVID-19 y Asistencia Al Enfermo con Imelda Aguirre y Andrea Alcala <i>Cuidar a alguien que vive con demencia durante la pandemia de COVID-19 agrega desafíos únicos para los cuidadores. Este programa proporciona consejos simples que los proveedores de cuidados pueden poner en práctica, ya sea que la persona que vive con demencia viva en su hogar, en un centro residencial, o en casa de sus proveedores de cuidado.</i>	
Wednesday, July 8th	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	COVID-19 and Caregiving with Elliot Montgomery Sklar & Lucy Barylak, MSW <i>Join us as we continue our discussion on how to cope during the COVID-19 outbreak, and how to safely transition into a new normal. Lucy Barylak, MSW and Dr. Elliot Sklar will talk about the most recent updates and issues impacting caregivers, and answer questions on how to stay safe and healthy in these unprecedented times.</i>	
Thursday, July 9th	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	Dear Lucy: How to respond to a love one who suffers from dementia during the Coronavirus with Lucy Barylak, MSW <i>People who suffer from dementia can become even more confused at this time. There are changes in their routine, people are wearing masks, not able to leave the home, can become more agitated, afraid, etc. How should caregivers respond and what they need to know and do.</i>	
Monday, July 13th	1:00 pm Eastern 12:00 pm Central 11:00 am Mountain 10:00 am Pacific	You are not alone: Caregiving in the Time of Covid-19 with Gary Barg <i>A discussion on the challenges faced by caregivers as they care for loved ones during and after the pandemic. Share viable solutions, answers to your questions, and family caregiving tips important to caregivers during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. **Sponsored by the North Central Texas Caregiver Teleconnection**</i>	
Tuesday, July 14th	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	Caring for the Caregiver with Dr. Nestor Praderio <i>Caregivers are a noble breed. They are selfless and devoted. They exude compassion, kindness and genuine love. They consistently put others before themselves to the point of exhaustion. In extreme cases Caregiving may even be detrimental to one's own health and wellbeing. Learn how to validate your feelings as a Caregiver and listen to other Caregivers about their coping strategies to avoid Caregiver burnout.</i>	
Tuesday, July 21	12:00 pm Eastern 11:00 am Central 10:00 am Mountain 9:00 am Pacific	Dementia Dialogues: Communication in Dementia with Tam Cummings, PhD <i>A Person With Dementia (PWD) is suffering from a terminal brain disease. Understanding how memory works, knowing the type of dementia your loved one has, and the stage of the disease, allows caregivers to target conversation to the memories that continue to function. Using this skill allows for interactions with old memory and can lead families to new insights into their loved one's younger life. ***Sponsored by VITAS Healthcare***</i>	
Wednesday, July 29th	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	COVID-19 and Caregiving with Elliot Montgomery Sklar & Lucy Barylak <i>Join us as we continue our discussion on how to cope during the COVID-19 outbreak, and how to safely transition into a new normal. Lucy Barylak, MSW and Dr. Elliot Sklar will talk about the most recent updates and issues impacting caregivers, and answer questions on how to stay safe and healthy in these unprecedented times.</i>	



A program of the WellMed Charitable Foundation

Register online at www.caregiverteleconnection.org or call 866.390.6491 Toll Free

Monthly MIPPA Moment:

DHS Works with USDA and Retailers to Make Grocery Shopping Safe for FoodShare Households

MIPPA (Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act) has a goal of educating older adults on Medicare's cost-saving benefits & preventive services.

To help support members in safely using their FoodShare benefits during the pandemic, beginning May 21st of 2020, **Wisconsin households that use FoodShare will be able to shop online at two designated grocery retailers currently set up at the national level to accept online payment: Amazon and Walmart.** FoodShare is the state's program that helps Wisconsinites with limited resources buy the food they need for good health and it has seen an increase in applications for the benefit since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure to be able to shop online with the benefit. (View the entire Wisconsin DHS news release [here](#).)

The FoodShare program is Wisconsin's version of the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). The program provides funds to eligible households to purchase groceries using what looks like a debit card. You may see if you are eligible and apply for the benefit at access.wisconsin.gov/access/.

For more information on MIPPA Programs, call MIPPA Program Specialist Leilani Amundson at 608-240-7458.



Connecting People with the Assistance They Need

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

(608) 240-7400

Website: www.daneadrc.org

Email: ADRC@countyofdane.com

Click on the button below to follow the ADRC on facebook.



Caring for the Caregiver Program

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