

# Pathways

SERVING FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS OF BRAIN IMPAIRED ADULTS AND THE FRAIL ELDERLY

WINTER 2008

## Help Is Not the Enemy

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ing was no exception; besides having Charlie with him, he had a large filled trash bag ready to pitch in the bright blue recycling can. As I got closer to his driveway and he got closer to the trashcan, I thought the timing was perfect and said, "Good morning, may I open the lid for you?" He gruffly muttered, "I've been throwing my trash away for 83 years and I don't need any help from you, girl." Ouch! It felt as if he had slapped me across the face. If he had been a Sacramento King, I would have offered to help. With his cutting remark in my heart, I walked on and wondered, "Why does help for so many of us feel like the enemy?"

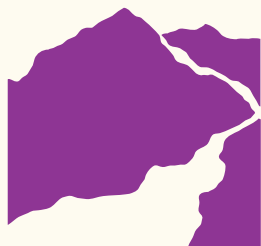
**W**ith hunched shoulders and a grimace, I pulled up my sweats. As soon as the front door is at my back, the drudgery of "having to walk" quickly disappears. I need the daily exercise (I learned that as a caregiver), enjoy saying "hello" to my neighbors and the kids walking to school, and delight in noticing how each garden changes through the seasons. One morning I saw an elderly man, whom I had seen many times, and said a morning "hello". He was walking unsteady down his driveway as he navigated his dog Charlie on a leash. In the past, I'd always worried about him falling as I couldn't tell "who was taking whom for a walk." I just knew it must take great courage for him to get up and out to walk. This morn-

Accepting help is not a sign of weakness but often an act of accepting a kindness – whether from family, a friend, or even a stranger out for a morning walk.

As caregivers we often get upset when the person we are caring for refuses help and won't even try something new that might make life a little easier. We think, "He is so stubborn!" Yet when we hold that mirror up close to ourselves, we can see all too well that we have the same struggle. It's simply hard to ask or accept help from others. But to survive and thrive as caregivers, we must learn to be more accepting. We can't afford to jeopardize our mental and physical health by trying to do it all alone.

It truly saddens me that many of us fight so hard to be as independent as possible and seem

Continued on P2



**DEL ORO**  
CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER

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# Pathways

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## ABOUT DEL ORO CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER

Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center is an independent, private, non-profit program funded through a contract with the California State Department of Mental Health, grants and private donations. **Our mission is to improve the well being of caregivers and provide support throughout the caregiving process.**

### PROGRAM SERVICES:

- Information and Referral
- Family Consultation
- Counseling
- Respite Care
- Legal/Financial Consultation
- Education & Training
- Support Groups

For information about eligibility for our program, contact Del Oro CRC at (916) 971-0893 or (800) 635-0220 or the Grass Valley Office at (530) 274-1005.



## Help is Not the Enemy . . .

Continued from P1

to never realize that what makes us human is being inter-dependent.

A friend I knew through the YMCA seemed to always be able to accept help from others in such a positive way. She was one of my life teachers. She had one adult child, two grandsons, a sister, a brother-in-law, her husband's best friend, their next door neighbors who they were close to, and a nephew who all helped with the care of her husband. She always said it takes a village to take care of someone and yourself at the same time, and was she right on the money. It was interesting that she learned to accept help from seeing her husband battle a long, debilitating illness. She would say, "If my sweetheart can accept doing less and less, so can I." As his health declined, he was always adjusting to needing more in-home help, and she knew she needed to do the same. She was a great role model because she did ask for help. Even her two grandsons, who were young adults, actively helped their grandparents. She never said what I hear so often, "They have their own busy lives, and I hate to bother them with our problems." Instead, she use to say, "Raising decent, caring children and grandchildren is what everyone wants to do, and I think it's important to call out to them when we need help, even if they don't volunteer."

Several years ago, I was asked to be a guest speaker to an energetic group of high school students, soon to be graduates, and their proud parents on the topic, Am I Prepared to Leave Home. I started with a bang: "I would like to first address the parents in the room. If you have taught your children to be independent, you have missed the boat." You could have heard a pin drop in the large auditorium. Heads turned, and all eyes were glued to me. I paused, waited in silence for those words to wash over the audience, and then said, "We need to realize we are all interdependent people. We need to rely on each other, and this notion that we can move through life independently is simply not true. We need help from each other throughout life."

When we are the caregiver, it is often as difficult to accept help from others as it is for the person we love and are caring for. Caregivers are extraordinarily fortunate to live in California, knowing we have eleven Caregiver Resource Centers throughout the state, all ready and able to help us on our caregiving journey.

Starting this year, try these four painless ways you can reach out for help:

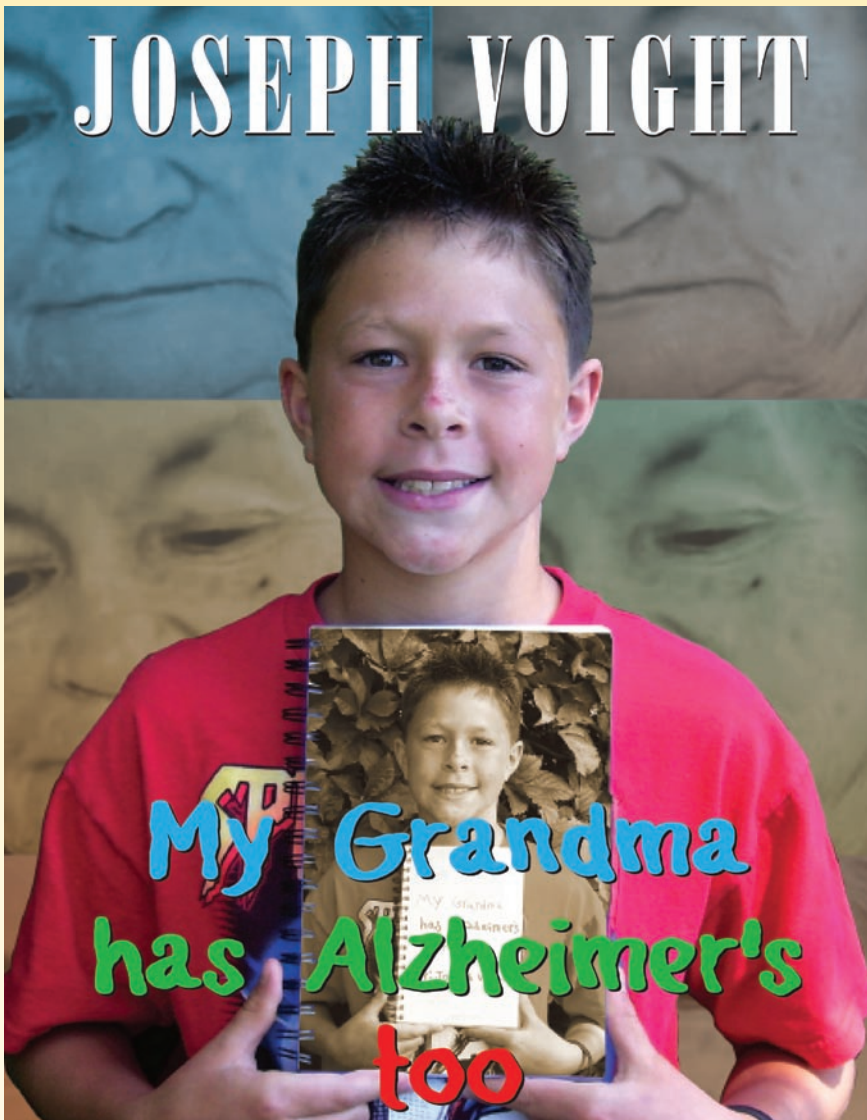
- Call (800) 635-0220, the Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center, and ask to become a Del Oro client.
- Stop by a Caregiver Support Group or try another one if you haven't found the right fit.
- Attend a Caregiver Workshop. You will walk away with fresh ideas, innovative coping techniques, plus practical examples on how to obtain more help and take better care of yourself.
- Ask three people to help you – someone who lives far away, someone who lives close by (under the age of 35), and someone you haven't met yet.

***One of the hardest lessons in life is being able to understand the fact:***

***We need to practice accepting help way before we need it!***

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# JOSEPH VOIGHT



## My Grandma has Alzheimer's too

## Wisdom Beyond His Years

*11-year-old Joseph Voight shares lessons in selflessness, compassion and patience.*

**KATHY HAS BEEN A DEL ORO CLIENT SINCE 2004.** For the last 5 years she has been taking care of her grandma, Dixie, who has Alzheimer's. Along with her supportive husband, Kathy is slathered between two slices of bread in what is known as the "sandwich generation", caring for both her children and Dixie. For many caregivers, caring for the needs of two generations is a familiar dynamic. What makes this household unique is a child's response to the caregiving situation. Let me introduce 11-year-old Joseph Voight, a clever and conscientious kid who was determined to share his experiences with other kids who face similar situations. Over the past two years, Joseph has put his thoughts down on paper and has authored a 35-page book titled, "My Grandma has Alzheimer's Too", because around the house, Dixie is known as "grandma". I had the opportunity to spend some time with this young talent and his family to learn more about his book and personal experience – he shared quotes taken directly from the pages of his book. This is what Joseph shared with me . . .

### What is daily life like with your grandma?

**JV:** I take walks with her sometimes – I have learned to walk very slowly and to be patient with her. At church, I help her around and walk with her. At home, I make sure that she is comfortable. I'll bring her a glass of water or whatever she needs. When I get home from school in the afternoon, I can walk in the door and know what kind of mood grandma is in and how she is doing. Sometimes she has sundowners and I know that I have to play quietly with my brother so that she does not get agitated. We put on some nice calming music, and that keeps her happy. It's hard sometimes, but I know what helps to keep her calm. Dinner is always interesting because we are always looking around the house to find things. She puts things in the wrong places, and we have to hunt for them. If my mom needs to peel potatoes, it takes forever because we are looking everywhere for the potato peeler! It's like we have an Easter egg hunt everyday! At night time, the whole family gets involved with her bedtime routine. Sometimes it's hard to get her to bed – but we know how to pretend that we are all getting ready for bed – and most of the time she goes along with it. "The two big words I've learned are . . . "So What" . . . so what if they wear the same shirt for two weeks – these things can get on your nerves! Remember . . . "So What". (Pg 4)

### How do you not take it personally?

**JV:** I know I wrote the book to help other kids, but it's hard to do it every day. Some days are easier than others. When she accuses me of stealing her purse, I have to go along – even if I didn't even touch her things. I will apologize to my grandma for her missing purse and go find it to bring it to her. I talk about "so what" in my book, but it's hard to do that and to keep a good attitude every day. I know that the brain disease is not her fault. I guess it is a little easier for me

because I did not know my grandma or what she was like before Alzheimer's. She moved in with us when I was six and she already had Alzheimer's then. This is the only side of her I know.

### How do your friends view older adults or your grandma?

**JV:** Some of them just think that they are old and they can't do much. Some of my friends are very understanding and nice to my grandma. Some are frightened because of her outbursts. Sometimes she says things that scare them. One time, my mom was dropping off my friends in our car, and grandma was with us. As my friends were getting out of the car, my grandma shouted, "Where are you going? . . . You are my boys!" They were a little frightened and surprised.

### What's the most difficult part of having your grandma live at home?

**JV:** The hardest part for me is not being able to play sports like the other kids. My mom has my grandma to take care of and my baby brother who is two. It's hard for her to take me to practice

*continued on P6*

# Del Oro Caregiver Resource is pleased to offer the following FREE caregiver workshops

\* If you need someone to care for your loved one so that you may attend a class, limited in-home respite is available. Please indicate your need for respite upon registering for a class.

## DECISIONS, DIRECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Deciding if and when to move your family member from home to a care facility can be one of the hardest decisions a caregiver makes. Whether you are currently thinking about a move or just need to know more, guest speaker Ginger McMurchie, Consultant with Senior Care Solutions will share information about:

- Home-care options and the limitations of in-home care
- Options for long-term placement and choosing a care setting that matches your loved one's needs
- Different levels of care provided by Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing and Memory Care Facilities

**DATE:** Thursday, January 17, 2008

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**LOCATION:** Senior Service Agency; McFall Room  
224 South Sutter Street  
Stockton, CA 95203

**COST:** FREE!

**TO REGISTER:** Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center  
(916) 971-0893

## WE NEED TO TALK – FAMILY CONVERSATIONS WITH OLDER DRIVERS

This seminar offers easy-to-use, practical information to help families advise their loved ones on whether it is time to limit or give up driving. Discussion will include such challenging topics as observing warning signs, conversation openers, how to construct a caring and effective conversation about driving, and selecting the right messenger. Other information will lead the seminar participant to additional resources, a handy way to estimate the cost of transportation, and ideas for finding alternative transportation. This free event is sponsored by AARP, Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center and Area 4 Agency on Aging.

**DATE:** Thursday, January 31, 2008

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**LOCATION:** Area 4 Agency on Aging  
2260 Park Towne Circle, #100  
Sacramento, CA 95825

**COST:** FREE!

**TO REGISTER:** Area 4 Agency on Aging  
(916) 486-1876

Note: Seating is limited; register early!

## CAPITOL CAREGIVER SERIES – FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Family communication can often be challenging under everyday circumstances. But conflicts and tensions often intensify between family members when caring for a loved one with dementia or other chronic health conditions. Join Larry Dawes, MSW, Senior Care Manager for Eskaton Senior Connection, as he presents effective strategies for communicating with family members about coordination of care and answers your questions on this important topic.

**DATE:** Thursday, February 7, 2008

**TIME:** 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 4203 (4th Floor)

**COST:** FREE!

**TO REGISTER:** Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center  
(916) 971-0893

## CREATIVE ADVANTAGE

Discover new ways to explore your creativity as a way to reduce stress, relax and create a more peaceful environment. Join Elizabeth Rawson, Master of Arts and Family Consultant for Del Oro Caregiver Resource

Center, for this hands on workshop as she presents the soothing effect of art for caregivers.

**DATE:** Thursday, February 7, 2008

**TIME:** 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** Yuba County One Stop; Yuba Room  
1114 Yuba Street  
Marysville, CA 95901

**COST:** FREE!

**TO REGISTER:** Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center  
(916) 971-0893

## COMMON SENSE APPROACH TO ALZHEIMER'S CAREGIVING

Guest presenter, John Gorman, co-founder of the Alzheimer's Aid Society, will be presenting on Alzheimer's caregiving. With a thorough understanding of the disease process, John will address the frequently asked questions about Alzheimer's Disease, discuss the do's and don'ts of Alzheimer's caregiving, and will share practical strategies and valuable communication techniques to help caregivers assist their loved ones with daily experiences such as bathing, eating, and aggressive behavior. You won't want to miss this informative presentation!

**DATE:** Thursday, February 28, 2008

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** IHHS Public Authority Office  
425 E. Harding Way  
Stockton, CA 95204

**COST:** FREE!

**TO REGISTER:** Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center  
(916) 971-0893

## FINDING COMEDY IN CAREGIVER CHAOS

Are you a caregiver who needs a little laughter in your life? Join Patty Wooten, RN, BSN, a successful nurse, a renowned international speaker, author and thought leader in therapeutic humor, as she presents on the importance of utilizing humor as a means to reduce personal stress.

**DATE:** Wednesday, March 26, 2008

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** St. Joseph's Medical Center – Main Auditorium  
1800 North California Street  
Stockton, CA 95204

**COST:** FREE!

**TO REGISTER:** St. Joseph's Medical Center  
(209) 461-5061

## ANNUAL CAREGIVER EDUCATION CONFERENCE – FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS UNDERSTANDING MEMORY LOSS: YOU CAN DO IT!

The Greater Sacramento Area's premiere education conference will feature distinguished experts discussing research, hope for the future, and how to talk with your doctor if you suspect memory loss. Concurrent sessions on topics will include: Medication Management, Meaningful Activities, Legal and Financial Planning, Assessing and Managing Behaviors, Stress Relief for Caregivers, and a panel conversation about Early Stage Alzheimer's Disease. An Exhibitors Fair runs continuously throughout the day, bringing you local community resources.

**DATE:** Wednesday, March 26, 2008

**TIME:** 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

(registration opens at 8:00 a.m.)

**LOCATION:** LionsGate Hotel and Conference Center, in the Garden Pavilion Building, McClellan, Sacramento

\*Additional workshops offered may not appear here – please check our website for updates [www.deloro.org](http://www.deloro.org) or telephone (800) 635-0220.

**TO REGISTER:** Contact Denise Davis (Denise.Davis@alz.org or by phone (916) 930-9080 or (800) 272-3900). Online registration is available at [www.alz.org/norcal](http://www.alz.org/norcal) (Education Program section).

**COST:** Includes morning refreshments, lunch, and all conference materials.  
\$25 early bird special for family caregivers (\$30 after March 1st)  
\$60 early bird special for CNA/HHA; includes CEU certificate (\$65 after March 1st)  
\$75 early bird special for BRN, RCFE, LMFT, LCSW, NHA; includes CEU certificate (\$80 after March 1st) A limited number of scholarships are available for family caregivers. If you need someone to care for your loved one so that you may attend, limited in-home respite care is available. Please indicate your need for respite upon registering.

## A DOSE OF *Inspiration*

Little acts of kindness which we render to each other in everyday life, are like flowers by the way-side to the traveler: they serve to gladden the heart and relieve the tedium of life's journey.

EUNICE BATHRICK

Begin today! No matter how feeble the light, let it shine as best it may. The world may need just that quality of light which you have.

ELDER HENRY C. BLINN

## Kudos Klub!

In the Fall 2007 issue of Pathways, we introduced our Kudos Klub! It's an opportunity for us to acknowledge caregivers for a job well done. Caregivers are expert givers, and we have the opportunity to learn so much from each other as we partner in this caregiving journey together. Here are some thoughts from Del Oro clients who have graciously shared their unique caregiver perspective with us . . .

**"My caregiving journey began** in 1998. During that year I was the primary caregiver for my dad, mom, sister, and husband. I felt like I was banging my head against the wall trying to find resources in Sutter County, especially for traumatic brain injury, which my sister has. It was in 2000 that I finally got connected – I saw an announcement in the paper for a workshop for caregivers. I went and learned about the importance of getting help – that's when I learned about Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center. I have a Del Oro family consultant who stays in touch with me and is a consistent, professional contact. After getting connected, I was able to learn about the resources I needed that were not available in my county. For me, Del Oro is both my sole guide and soul guide. It's typical for caregivers to put themselves last, and you can't do that. I

have learned that you just have to decide to take care of yourself. If I become broken down, I know that I am no good for the people I care about the most."

—Meg Burgin



**"As a caregiver who is disabled,** it is difficult for me to get out. Every day is a struggle. Recently, I had the opportunity to have someone come look after my husband so that I could attend a caregiver conference – my first educational event as a caregiver. My husband and I both thought that it would be worthwhile for me to attend and learn something new. I found the event to be wonderful – it was so good to be surrounded by other caregivers who are also in this silent situation. We cried and shared concerns. We are all "one" in this together. We are all related – we are a caregiver family. No one else can really understand that unless you get involved with other caregivers. I recommend that caregivers go to any available event so they can learn and get connected with other caregivers – every tidbit of education can help no matter what situation you are in." —K. Phillips

**I'm just an "everyday Joe"** trying to survive in the world. I've been through

so many challenges in my life. I work full time and am a 31-year-old widow with three children who are 7, 6, and 4. My husband and best friend passed away of a heart attack. As I'm trying to teach my children about life and love, I take care of my mom who is disabled. She's in and out of the hospital and her wheelchair as her MS progresses. I just do the best I can as a caregiver and have to pick my battles – there is a time to fight and a time to let go. I have a "thrive to live" ethic that I learned from my mother, and all I can say is to keep your head held high and always tell the people you love that you love them. I also have to say "thank you" to my mother because she is the one who taught me how to LIVE.—  
Connie Higgins

If you would you like to join our Kudos Klub, we want to hear from you! For our Spring/Summer issue, simply reply to this question:

### **The best part of being a caregiver is . . .**

Please submit responses by March 1, 2008, and your submission may be selected to appear in our next newsletter! Please send your submissions to Taryn Benson, Pathways Editor, Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center, 5723A Marconi Avenue, Carmichael, CA 95608, or via e-mail to [tbenson@deloro.org](mailto:tbenson@deloro.org).

# Long-Distance Caregiving

It was the dilemma experienced by many people who live far from their aging parents. Sara, on a business trip as a buyer for her company, stopped in Chicago to visit her 80-year old mother. During her stay, she observed her mother had become more frail and forgetful since her last visit. She had neglected paying bills, and after seeing her refrigerator, Sara suspected her mother was not eating properly. Sara's suggestion that her mother move in with her was met with an indignant refusal. Sara wanted to provide support to her mother while respecting her autonomy.

How to manage long distance caregiving? Sara called Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center and requested a family consultation. She and the family consultant developed a care plan based on Sara's and her mother's specific needs. Here are some suggestions that might apply to your situation as well as Sara's:

- Consider all the options before moving your relative. In-home services may permit them to remain in their home, close to neighbors and friends.
- If you haven't visited recently, do so as soon as feasible. Take note of possible problem areas such as nutrition, safety, driving ability, medications, finances and physical or emotional illness.
- Make sure legal and financial affairs are in place and up to date, and that you know where to locate critical documents and papers. (Call for FCA's "Where to Find My Important Papers." There is no charge.)
- Set up a system of support if necessary for your family member's safety. For example, ask a friend or relative to check in with your parent on a



regular basis. If that is not adequate, you may need to hire someone to help your family member with meals and personal care.

- Recognize and acknowledge your own limits. As your relative requires increasing levels of care, you may become overwhelmed. Consider hiring a geriatric care manager to coordinate your family member's care.
- Plan ahead to have family leave or personal days available in case you need to make an unexpected visit to your relative. Put aside money in a special fund to pay for such trips.

Family Caregiver Alliance offers helpful resources for long distance caregivers. You can visit their website [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org) and access "Where to Find My Important Papers", or an informative guide titled "Long Distance Caregiving". You can also call for a free copy (800) 445-8106 or e-mail [info@caregiver.org](mailto:info@caregiver.org).

If you are a long distance caregiver yourself, call Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center at (800) 635-0220 and ask to become a client. Del Oro offers a comprehensive package of programs and services to support you throughout your caregiving journey. Call us today!

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## Alzheimer's Awareness Club, St. Francis High School Young Women Who are Making a Difference in our Community

**KRISTIN LEE**, founder of the Alzheimer's Awareness Club at St. Francis High School and the members of this worthwhile group have donated a generous \$1,500 to Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center. This group of extraordinary young women are all touched by Alzheimer's disease in some way and have come together to provide support and assistance to each other and now the community. Their donation will be used to provide respite services to families caring for someone affected by Alzheimer's disease. We are extremely grateful to Kristin and the Alzheimer's Club for their support of our agency and the clients we serve. Thank you for making a difference in our community!

## Wisdom . . .

*continued from P3*

and games because we never know what might be going on. Sometimes grandma is sick or really frail. Sometimes she has had to go to the hospital. I really miss not being able to play sports on a team but I understand that's something we can't do right now.

### How are you able to handle things so well emotionally?

**JV:** I used to be a little angry about how things were. My mom got married, grandma came to live with us, and then my brother was born – everything pretty much happened at the same time. My mom was doing the best she could – but it was hard for me. My church thought it would be a good idea if I started a journal and wrote down my feelings. So my mom and I would sit on the couch together and we would write about stuff. It helped me be more positive about things. That's where we got the idea for the book. There isn't really anything to help out kids my age who are living with someone who has Alzheimer's and I wanted to do something about it. Some of the pages my mom and I wrote down together were the ones I used for my book. *"One of the hardest things is to share your parents; we have to learn not to be selfish."* (Pg 9)

### What advice would you give to caregivers?

**JV:** Have a good sense of humor. Don't let everything get to you – go along with the flow. We have a book where we write down all the funny things that grandma does. She makes us laugh a lot. When we are in a public place sometimes she will walk right up to a man she has never met and start flirting. They are not interested in her, but she doesn't care – she is having a great time. One time she thought she had to return my baby brother to a rent-a-baby store. She thought that we had borrowed him and needed to give him back. *"Sometimes they can say really funny things. And the best medicine is to laugh. Keep a good sense of humor"*. (pg 8)

My Grandma Has Alzheimer's Too is being published by DNA Press and will be available April 2008. For more information or to order a copy of this book (ISBN 978-1-933255-44-6), contact DNA Press at (800) 888-4741 or visit [www.dnapress.com](http://www.dnapress.com)

*Interview conducted by Taryn Benson, Editor*

# Donations

**Your tax-deductible contribution** will help fund critical programs for family members who are dedicated to providing long-term care at home. There are various ways to give to Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center:

- Donate by mail – make your check payable to Del Oro CRC and mail it to 5723A Marconi Avenue, Carmichael, CA 95608.
- Donate Your Automobile – Del Oro is now able to accept used car donations in California through the not for profit corporation, Cars 4 Causes. This agency handles all the paper-work, title change, free pick up and sale of the vehicle. Receive a tax deduction for the fair market value of your vehicle.

For more information call Cars 4 Causes at 1-800-766-CARE.

- Donate Stocks or Mutual Funds
- Donate Real Estate
- Donate online at [www.deloro.org](http://www.deloro.org) using your credit card. Del Oro CRC has partnered with [groundspring.org](http://groundspring.org) to provide a secure site for credit card transactions.

If you would like to discuss your donation in detail, please contact Michelle Nevins, Executive Director of Del Oro CRC at (916) 971-0893.

# Thank You

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*Due to publication deadlines, your memorial or honorarium may not appear in this listing.  
It will be included in the following issue.*



Your contributions help fund critical programs for family caregivers. Donations or memorial gifts of any size are most welcome.

Please accept my tax-deductible donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center  
5723A Marconi Avenue  
Carmichael, CA 95608*

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