

Pathways

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

SPRING/SUMMER
2009

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and I walked on the beach and held hands and listened to the waves. The day we played in the snow and talked about childhood snow fights. A trip to the store that went rather well, some nice new clothes for her and ice cream after that. The good days.

Mixed with so many we want to forget, the good days are a welcome bright spot—and something we often have to earn with difficulty. We patiently explain again and again that a coat must be worn in the rain, shoes should match, hair needs combing, voices kept low in a restaurant, and this is your daughter who plays the cello.

Our pain is lessened when we succeed in bringing a light of recognition to Mom's eyes when she now remembers her family and smiles. And, we look forward to the good days when the planned outing goes relatively smoothly, the coat worn without protest, and no waitresses have been insulted.

Yet it is painful, too, to notice how they are slipping away, fewer and fewer good days with each passing week. Her grasp on the real world fading faster than I can keep up. More and more explanations required, fewer and fewer lights of recognition found. Her understanding of everyday reality diminishes uncontrollably, replaced by fear of this un-

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A Good Day

I want to talk about the good days—those days we cherish and remember amidst all of those frustrating, confusing, and deeply sad days. The day that reminds us there are light and humor and uplifting moments to be found in dealing with an otherwise terribly difficult disease.

With patience and practice—with love, care, help, and some prayer—the good days somehow come to us. That day that Mom



DEL ORO
CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER

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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 www.deloro.org.



A Good Day . . .

Continued from P1

familiar place I call my world and anger that I keep trying to drag her back into this realm she finds increasingly strange and scary.

"Yes dear," she is perhaps trying to say to me, "I know that your world demands that shoes match, but my world does not require this. When are you going to pay some attention to my world?"

And so, I want to tell you about the good days that can be found there too—in that other world. Maybe that world seems scary and unfamiliar to us—hard to enter, harder to smile in, tempting to run from—yet no less scary and unfamiliar to us than our world is to them. An even trade, I'd say.

The day I found my Mom's world was a time I came to visit her on a sunny day one summer, a day when a walk in the garden of my world would seem the right thing to do—a bright conversation about the weather was certainly to be expected, or at the very least an enthusiastic comment about her pretty outfit or brightly colored shoes. The staff of the Alzheimer's care facility should be greeted cheerfully, her room inspected for cleanliness, and information gathered about her eating and medications.

And yet somehow—on this particular day—all of those things could wait. Instead, I walked quietly to her side, sat down nearby, and waited. I closed my eyes. I touched her hand and waited some more. And I knew when it was time to quietly leave, somehow feeling that Mom approved my lack of bright conversation.

After that—in between the days of needed greetings and inspections and information-gathering, I inserted more days of quiet. I began to look forward to them—these were Mom's days—days when she controlled her own world while I made no attempt to bring her into mine—and maybe, if I were good, she would let me into her world with her.

She did. And it was a privilege to be allowed there—I found that she had friends there in her world (I called them her invisible friends)—and that she had insistently real discussions with them, as well as humorous conversations, arguments, parties, jokes and debates. She let me spend time with her for awhile in her world and gave me good days to remember there too—good days that, I hope, she remembers too.

I tell this story to remind us to pause in our own frustrating days and peek into the world of our good friends who may be leaving our own familiar reality for another new, strange, interesting, sometimes scary, sometimes lovely one—good days may be found there in ways we may not have expected. And among those good days, there is indeed something important to learn about that world—about quiet, about accepting the moment, about listening and hearing, about seeing what is invisible in ours—that makes it well worth the trip.



Jennifer Harrington with her mother, Joan Preston

By Jennifer Harrington, Alzheimer's Association Volunteer.
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SAVE THE DATE

4th Annual

Tropical Luau

Fundraiser for Del Oro Caregiver
Resource Center

Thursday, July 16, 2009
5:30-8:30 pm

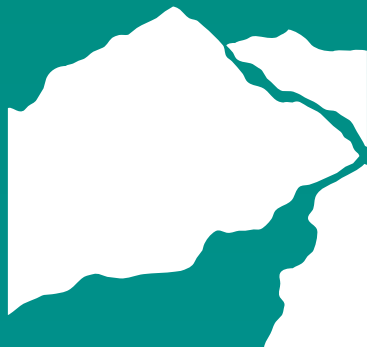
Join us for this festive event which
will include a cook-off by local chefs
from various senior living communities!

Raffle • Silent Auction • Live Entertainment

Divine Savior Catholic Church
9079 Greenback Lane, Orangevale, CA 95662

For information on sponsorship or entering
your chef for the cook-off, please contact:

Carol or Christine at Senior Care Solutions (916) 965-5565



DEL ORO
CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER

*Celebrating our
22nd Anniversary*

A P R I L 2 0 0 9

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.

YES I CAN! A SERIES OF FREE CLASSES TO HELP EMPOWER YOU AS YOU CARE FOR A LOVED ONE:

LOCATION: Sierra Nevada Home Care
1020 McCourtney Road
Grass Valley, CA 95949

TIME: 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

COST: FREE!

TO REGISTER: Please contact Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center at (800) 635-0220

COMMUNICATION & BEHAVIORS

Learn effective communication techniques when dealing with challenging behaviors

DATE: Monday, April 20th

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The importance of knowing the valuable resources available to you as a caregiver

DATE: Monday, April 27th

BODY MECHANICS

Become familiar with safe transfer techniques

DATE: Monday, May 4th

LEGAL & FINANCIAL PLANNING & ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

Emphasis on the importance of planning in advance

DATE: Monday, May 11th

NUTRITION & INCONTINENCE

Learn more about the importance of good nutrition for the elderly and a discussion of incontinence and its impact on both the caregiver and care receiver

DATE: Monday, May 18th

A DIFFERENT DIALECT

Join us for this caregiver workshop, which will help educate you in the Affirmative Response Approach to Communication.

This communication method is an excellent tool in connecting with someone who has memory loss. You will also learn the importance of approach, perception and how you communicate with feelings, which say much more than words.

Laura Wayman with the Dementia Whisperers will share her vast knowledge in this approach.

DATE: Tuesday, April 28, 2009

TIME: 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

LOCATION: Fremont Rideout Conference Center
989 Plumas Street
Yuba City, CA 95991

COST: FREE!

TO REGISTER: Please contact the Alzheimer's Association at (916) 930-9080

NOTE: This workshop will be repeated as follows:

DATE: Monday, May 4, 2009

TIME: 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Merrill Gardens at Manteca
430 North Union Road
Manteca, CA 95337

COST: FREE!

TO REGISTER: Please contact Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center at (800) 635-0220

LEGAL & FINANCIAL TIPS FOR SENIORS & CAREGIVERS

Please join us for a FREE workshop about how to navigate issues regarding your finances and the law. Presented by: Elder Law Attorney—Trudi Riley Quinn

In this presentation you will learn current information on:

- Durable Powers of Attorney
- Conservatorships
- Wills and Trusts
- Estate Planning
- Long Term Care Insurance
- Applying for Medi-Cal

DATE: Thursday, May 28, 2009

TIME: Noon – 1:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Western Sierra Residential Center
749 Main Street
Downieville, CA 95936

COST: FREE!

TO REGISTER: Please contact Cindy Osborn at Western Sierra Residential Center at (530) 289-1235

SAVE THE DATE:

ANNUAL CAREGIVER EVENT – DEL ORO HONORS NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVER MONTH

DATE: Wednesday, November 18, 2009

LOCATION: Radisson Hotel Sacramento

Stay tuned! More details to follow in Fall Pathways Newsletter.

Walking Caregiver Support Group

Del Oro caregiver Resource Center welcomes you to drop in and walk with a group of current and former caregivers. This group offers the opportunity for each person to share his or her caregiving experiences, enjoy nature, and get some exercise.

MEETING TIME: 2nd Tuesday of every month / 10am-11am

LOCATION: McKinley Park
601 Alhambra Blvd
Sacramento, CA 95816

Meet at the picnic benches south of the tennis courts. Plenty of street parking available.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please contact Genelle Smith, MSW, at (916) 971-0893 x 111.



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

Kudos Klub!

Caregivers share their most helpful tips

A BIG thank you to each of you who responded! Taking the time to share your thoughts with our readers is of great value to us at Del Oro! Here are the submissions to the question: What has surprised you the most about caregiving . . .

I am caring for my husband with semantic dementia. He keeps me very busy and is the reason I don't get to do a lot of the things I want to do. Often, I am overwhelmed by the task of caregiving and can be easily annoyed and consumed with everything that needs to be done. Through it all, I have been surprised to find joy in the tiniest things: walks with my husband instead of worrying about the laundry, his smile even when he is up at 3am, or his belly laugh when I feel stressed. Our circumstances have required me to slow down and re-think the things that matter most.

—*Beverly Martling, Del Oro client since 2007*

I am caring for my husband, and the most surprising thing about caregiving is that for many years' time there has been no outside support from his side of the family. It was heartbreaking because my husband always took such good care of them. I am grateful for my tiny family that has been here for me, but it takes more than that! Recently though, one of my husband's siblings moved to Sacramento and is now

offering help – I am happy about that!
—*Kai Phillips, Del Oro client since 2006*

I surprised myself by being able to go back to school part time – this has been a longtime goal of mine! In the caregiving process, I was able to familiarize myself with other ways to care for my mom and myself to free up time. I also learned about realistic expectations I can have for me and my mother.

—*Lynda Vaughan, Del Oro client since 2008*

I have never felt like the hours I have spent caring for my husband were a real burden because I am able to get out sometimes, and he hasn't minded a bit. But since I was given the opportunity to receive in-home respite care through Del Oro, I am now able to spend part of the day each week with a good friend. Knowing he is being cared for by a trusted caregiver has opened up life and living for me in new and surprising ways.

—*Frances Y. Del Oro Client since 2004*

I am a caregiver to my husband. I was at my wit's end as to what to do. I thought I would have to put him in a care home, but help came along from several sources. Now I have time for myself, and he has new friends that he likes. It takes time to start getting help, but it is out there. Just ask!

—*Dixie Morley, Del Oro client since 2008*

A DOSE OF *Inspiration*

Time is at once the most valuable and the most perishable of all our possessions.

JOHN RANDOLPH OF ROANOKE

All experience is an arch to build upon.

HENRY ADAMS

A cloudy day is no match for a sunny disposition.

WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD

The most important thing in any relationship is not what you get but what you give . . . In any case, the giving of love is an education in itself.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

We want to hear from you!

Simply respond to the question:

What strength did you discover in yourself through caregiving?

Please submit responses by **July 15, 2009** to be featured in our next newsletter. Please send submissions to Taryn Benson, Pathways Editor, DCRC, 5723A Marconi Avenue, Carmichael, CA 95608, or via e-mail to tbenson@deloro.org.

Join the Kudos Klub!

Recognizing Caregiver Burnout and How to Avoid It

Do you experience less and less energy? Do you have less desire for social contact? Do you feel impatient, frustrated or resentful? Do you feel that you ignore your own needs? Is it your experience that sleeping doesn't relieve feelings of exhaustion? Have you experienced any changes in appetite and/or weight? If you answered yes to any or all the questions, you might be a candidate for caregiver burnout.

Burnout is a progressive state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress to the point where the experience of caregiving is no longer a healthy or viable option for the caregiver and the person

receiving care. Burnout doesn't happen overnight. If you continue ignoring the signs of burnout, eventually it will creep up on you. Once you're in the middle of it, it's even harder to fight off the symptoms. Burnout usually has its roots in stress, so the earlier you recognize the symptoms of stress and take

steps to alleviate it, the better chance you will have of avoiding burnout. If you care for someone who has memory loss, or whose behavior is unpredictable or disruptive, the mental strain can be round the clock. Knowing your limits and when to ask for help is part of a successful approach to caregiving. A caregiver's health and safety is as important as that of the person being cared for.

Many caregivers care out of a sense of love and commitment; others feel a sense of obligation. Some familiar comments include, "I feel guilty leaving my mother at a strange place because I want to take a break." "Nobody can take care of my mother better than I can." "I'm the oldest daughter (or I'm the only

daughter), and it's expected of me to take care of my parent(s)". Many caregivers experience such a struggle. A caregiver often starts out feeling able to provide the best care for a parent or loved one and is determined to do it all.

"People today are feeling tremendous pressure to 'do it all,' taking care of children and aging parents while maintaining career and home. Instead of having a sense of accomplishment, many people feel guilt when they run out of energy to handle all the tasks." *Source: Ohio State University Department of Aging*

Maya Angelou, the renowned American poet and author, said, "If you find it in your heart to care for somebody, you will have succeeded." However, the rewards of caregiving, if they come at

all, can be intangible and far off. Taking care of yourself is not being selfish—it's being wise. Many caregivers are too busy with taking care of others and tend to ignore their own health. On the other hand, many caregivers are doing fine and are pleased with the role of caregiver. He/she may have the energy

to fulfill this role, and get support when needed, and is usually in a good mood. There is no such thing as "perfect caregiving," but as long as you can manage the tasks of caregiving and still have some time for yourself and for friends and family, the benefits for you and the person receiving care will be tangible.

If you feel you may be on track for caregiver burnout, there are local resources available to relieve and support you! To learn more about respite opportunities and eligibility in Greater Sacramento, here are some local agencies to contact:

- Asian Community Center (916) 393-9026 x 223
- Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center (916) 971-0893
- Triple-R Adult Day Program (916) 808-4003

"If you find it in your heart to care for somebody, you will have succeeded."

MAYA ANGELOU

Written & submitted by: Misa Takagi, Program Coordinator for Triple-R Adult Day Program

Del Oro Awarded Emergency Respite Grant

Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center has been awarded a \$15,000 grant by the M & M Whitmire Family Foundation. These funds will be used to provide Emergency Respite for Sacramento County family caregivers in need of immediate respite relief. The program will be utilized to relieve high-risk caregivers who are experiencing signs of clinical depression and/or increasing health challenges. The program began in January and will continue through December 2009. We appreciate the support of the M & M Whitmire Foundation!

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to our generous donors

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It will be included in the following issue.*



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