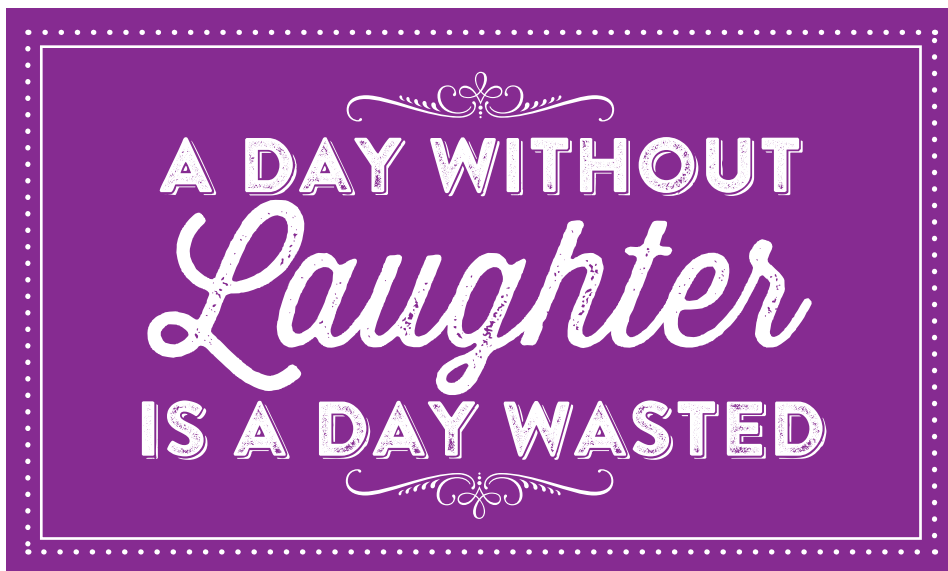


Pathways

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



You Just Have to Laugh

Diane Mason, Caregiver

I OFTEN LAY IN BED AT NIGHT AND CONTEMPLATE THE DAY'S EVENTS, or lack of them. What should have I done differently? Did I do a good job with handling this person I don't really know any longer? It is a very strange road I am walking; sometimes I feel as lost as my poor husband must feel. Although, possibly he doesn't feel lost at all, just existing in his own time and space. Alzheimer's is a bad joke played on those who have it and their caregivers. I learned early on, you have to laugh, you just have to laugh.

I will admit, some of the craziness is funny. For instance, just the other day, I was in the kitchen doing up dishes and thought to myself, "Things are a little too quiet," just like when the kids were little and things were too quiet, you knew something was amiss. I went to check on Mr. Wonderful. We had just purchased a new vacuum and to my horror, he had it in the middle of the street, plugged into a socket, vacuuming! He was happy as could be, thinking he was doing the entire neighborhood a real big favor. Luckily, no damage was done.

This nightmare began subtly, like a fog nestling over the valley. He started forgetting little things, and then BIG things. We loved the mountains and over the years transitioned from a pop-up tent to a fifth-wheel. One day, we were packing up when our traveling buddy noticed that Clayton had not properly hooked the trailer up to the truck. The brakes would not have worked going down the steep mountain road. The mistake would have sent the truck, trailer and us off into the wild blue yonder; not an ideal way to end a vacation. Knowing how dangerous this could have been, we went home and sold his beloved trailer. The hardest part was selling his pride and joy, a Long-Bed Dodge Diesel Ram. I don't get the love affair

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You Just Have to Laugh . . . continued from page 1

men have with their trucks; he would have rather sold me than his truck!

As the months passed, things happened little by little. Being the one observing the subtle changes, I knew something was going on, but did not want to admit it. Denial is a force that gives us the unique ability not to face the facts at hand. However, once he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, I had to face the issue. Clayton's doctor reported his diagnosis to the DMV and he was no longer able to drive. This is a very difficult blow to a man; it was as if his manhood had been stripped away. For months, he would go directly to the driver's side door and challenge me about him driving. He would scream and make a spectacle of himself, embarrassing me horribly. I wanted to shout out to all the onlookers, "He has Alzheimer's!"

If someone was to ask me the most difficult part of this journey, I would offer without hesitation, it is not having anyone to talk to.

One day Clayton took a shower and used a new roll of toilet paper to dry himself off and the shower. The floor in the shower was a gummed up mess as he tried to wash it all down the drain. He stood there so innocently, with a sweet, proud face. He had toilet paper over his entire body and looked like the abdominal snowman! You guessed it, I just had to laugh.

Some people with Alzheimer's suffer from "Sundowning," this affliction can drive you nuts. About mid-afternoon, as the sun begins to go down in the West, he wants to leave and begins to pack. He packs everything he can get his hands on—clothes, shoes, hangers, garden hoses, electric shears, ladders—anything he can fit in the trunk of the car. I let him, it seems harmless enough, and it keeps him busy; however, it is a big job returning everything to its rightful place. Clayton often accuses me of having a "Lover Boy," and I often wish I did, because then I would have someone

to help me put all this crap away! You have to laugh, right?

Every day I wake up not knowing what is in store for me. One afternoon I was taking clothes from the washer to the dryer when I noticed that there was liquid in the dryer. It appeared that Mr. Wonderful had mistaken this white, porcelain appliance as a toilet. He proceeded to pee in the dryer. What a horrible mess that was. It is months later and I can still detect a faint odor when the dryer warms up. If you have ideas on how to fix this problem, please let me know. You have to laugh, right?

I am very fortunate that Clayton can go to an Adult Day Care program to be with others and I can have a break away from him. The first time I took him to the program, I felt guilty, like I was a traitor abandoning him. However, I discovered that he really enjoyed himself and the staff were very loving towards him. I enjoy those four hours to myself two times a week. Even if it is to do housework and laundry, I am in heavenly solitude and peace.

If someone was to ask me the most difficult part of this journey, I would offer without hesitation, it is not having anyone to talk to. Sure, he is with me 24/7, but there is no conversation. Just the other day, I said to him, "Isn't the sky spectacular, all the beautiful cumulus clouds clustering here and there." In his little world of not knowing what is going on, he added, "I picked blueberries in Rhode Island." He is truly in his own world and it does not include me. In fact, Clayton has no clue who I am.

Each day is a new adventure and I have to remind myself that I must be thankful for every day, no matter what it brings. I know in my heart, someday I will lose him forever and will miss this crazy, challenging, wonderful existence we now share. It could be worse, and it is certain that someday it will be. For now, the alternative to laughing would be crying. So, to survive this, I have come to conclusion that ***you just have to laugh!***

Moonbeams

We are the moonbeams.
The caregivers who support each other.
We are the circle of wounded spirits
That come together to sing our hearts out.
We take back the night and bloom together in the dark.
We are flowers of the night, sweet and true.
Through writing and sharing
We reawaken the sleeping spirit
And celebrate our beauty.

From: Kakugawa, F. (2002). Mosaic Moon: Caregiving through Poetry. Watermark Publishing. Honolulu: HI. p. 209.

INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE TO CAREGIVER'S COLUMN

Please submit your contributions via email to crc@deloro.org. Please be sure to include your source(s), unless it is your own work. Additionally, please share how this information was beneficial to your caregiving journey.

A Dose of Inspiration

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

TIA WALKER

We change the world when we simply meet the needs of another.

KRISTEN WELCH

If you can make a difference for one person, then it is worth it.

JARED PADALECKI

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”

DALAI LAMA

Upcoming Powerful Tools for Caregivers Series!

Del Oro is pleased to announce the Powerful Tools series of classes for caregivers this winter. In the six weekly classes, caregivers develop a wealth of self-care tools to:

- Reduce personal stress
- Change negative self-talk
- Communicate needs to family members and health-care or service providers
- Communicate more effectively in challenging situations
- Recognize the messages in emotions, deal with difficult feelings
- Making tough caregiving decisions.

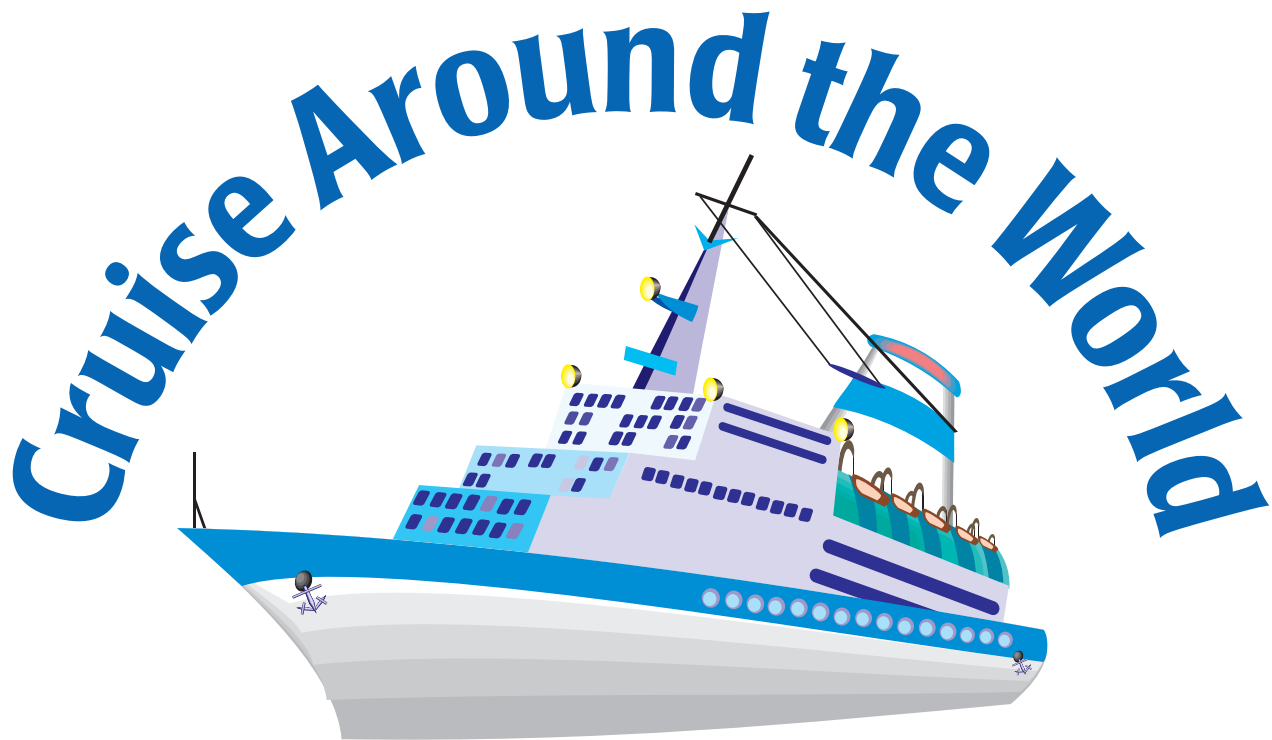
Class participants also receive a copy of The Caregiver Helpbook, developed specifically for the class. If you are interested in this worthwhile series, please call us at (916) 728-9333.

Parkinson Respite Subsidy Program

Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center and the Parkinson Association of Northern California (PANC) have forged a relationship to provide respite care to our mutual clients. PANC provides up to \$450 of care services to relieve someone caring for a person with Parkinson's who needs a bit of a break. Del Oro assess and arranges the care, offering a choice of Adult Day Care, In-home Care, or an overnight stay at an Assisted Living Facility. If you are not yet a Del Oro client and are caring for someone with Parkinson's, call us at (916) 728-9333 to access this valuable resource.

Lincoln Hills Foundation Respite Grant

Del Oro has been the proud recipient of respite grants through the Lincoln Hills Foundation since 2009. The Mission of the Lincoln Hills Foundation is to promote and fund solutions and programs that will enhance the quality of life for senior residents of the Lincoln Community. To qualify, the family caregiver must reside within the Lincoln/Sheridan community, and be caring for someone with a cognitive impairment or an individual over the age of 60. For further information, please call (916) 728-9333.



On June 16th, Del Oro Caregiver Resource Center held our 11th Annual Cruise Around the World Cook-off and Fundraiser in Orangethale. This fun event supports the efforts of Del Oro, allowing us to expand much needed services to family caregivers in our community.

At the heart of the event is a cook-off competition between local senior care providers. There were two phases to the competition—professional judges and crowd favorite. The professional judge panel consisted of Teresa Urkofsky, Chef and Culinary Faculty at American River College, Tina Macuha, Anchor and Reporter for Good Day Sacramento, and Keith Breedlove, Culinerdy Cruzer. The panel of judges scored each participant on presentation of the food, taste, originality, and authenticity to the region or country the culinary partner chose. We are pleased to announce this year's winners:

FIRST PLACE—Eskaton with their Fried Egg and Prosciutto Bison Burger and Parmesan and Chive Garlic Truffle Fries

SECOND PLACE—Alpha One with their entry of Apple Smoked Pork Tenderloin

THIRD PLACE—Atria El Camino Gardens with their Gol-gappa Appetizer with a Traditional Indian Dessert

CROWD FAVORITE—The event attendees chose Revere Court Memory Care as the overall "Crowd Favorite" with their Beach Party Platter.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF OUR WINNERS!!

Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, culinary partners, and attendees, Del Oro raised just over \$37,000 to provide vital services to family caregivers in our community! We appreciate your support of our mission and goal to improve the well-being of family caregivers throughout their journey.

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No Longer As Easy As Pie

Growing up, my mom loved to bake. Whether there was bread dough rising on the counter, woven lattice on a homemade apple pie or chocolate chip cookies warm from the oven, our home always smelled amazing. Even today, the smell of warm sugar and buttery crust reminds me of helping Mom in the kitchen.

Over the holidays I realized Mom can no longer roll out a pie crust or knead fresh dough. Arthritis has knotted her fingers and weakened her grip. Beyond baking, even tasks that were simple for her in the past are now difficult.

No challenge is harder than facing the changes in an aging parent. Roles begin to reverse and this can strain your relationship. Aegis is here to help. We offer the peace of mind you and your loved one needs to help them maintain their independence for as long as possible.

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Instructional Videos Help Family Caregivers Manage Medications

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The AARP Public Policy Institute collaborated with the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at the University of California Davis to develop a series of videos aimed at preparing family caregivers to perform the aforementioned tasks. The videos seek to help families in very meaningful ways that support the family member performing the difficult task and ultimately the person in need of the care.

The following are links to the first three videos in a series of five on administering and managing medications:

- <http://www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2016/family-caregiver-video-guide-to-managing-medications.html>
- <http://www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2016/family-caregiver-video-guide-to-managing-medications.html>
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