

# Caregiver Chronicles

December 2021



Caring for Caregivers

AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF DANE COUNTY  
2865 N SHERMAN AVE, MADISON, WI 53704  
608-261-9930

Whatever you believe in and whatever you celebrate, I hope your holiday season is full of connection, curiosity, and healing.

—*Vironika Wilde, poet and author*



## Wishing All a Season of Connection and Healing

As the holiday season approaches many of us are feeling disappointment that we are not going into it with all the hoped for freedoms we had before the Delta strain of COVID-19 set us back and the uncertainty introduced by Omicron. Yet, compared to last year there is much improvement. Vaccines have protected against the stunning numbers of deaths and hospitalizations we were seeing before they became available. It is also uplifting to see the opportunity for children in our communities to receive vaccines. Along with protecting our children, vaccinating them eases worry for older adults who are more vulnerable to COVID-19. There will be longed-for reunions between generations over the course of this holiday season that simply weren't possible last year, but we are still faced with a circulating virus that threatens health. We don't have the freedom to safely hold or attend all the kinds of gatherings and events we might want to and it is understandable to feel disappointment, frustration, and even a kind of exhaustion.

When faced with circumstances beyond our control we can only change our response. We adapt and roll with it to the best of our abilities. In a guest opinion published in the *New York Times* on November 17th, author Dr. Katharine Etsy wrote, "I'm 87, Triple Vaxxed and Living My Life Again"\* to share her personal experience. In it, she explains that if the risk of COVID-19 holds her back there is something still stronger drawing her out. Life expectancy at her age is six years, and she wants to make the most of her remaining "one wild and precious life," as described by the poet Mary Oliver. She also notes that while she is making the most of her time it doesn't mean she lives without fear. Dr. Etsy is still somewhat fearful of crowds and large gatherings, and is hesitant to touch other people. There is the awareness now that "what we take for granted as normal can change in an instant."

The author also points out that while people in their 80s faced a far greater risk of becoming ill with COVID-19 and dying, they are also resilient people. They were children during World War II after all. The author saw that while individuals in her age group were bored and lonely, they also faced less stress than she observed in her own adult children and her therapy clients in their 40s, 50s, and 60s, noting that their stress was extraordinary. It is often the younger people with whom she socializes who are the most hesitant to rejoin in-person activities. Many adult children of elderly parents were extremely protective to the point that it sometimes felt overwhelming to the parents.

This brings me to my own observations on the experience of caregivers at more than a year and a half of pandemic life. A significant number of caregivers are working and/or raising children in addition to caring for their older adult loved ones. Already overextended, the pandemic dangers and deprivations took an extreme toll on many caregivers. The combination of challenges was overwhelming for some and the options for respite were often suddenly unavailable or permanently lost as businesses and practices closed. Help with in-home personal cares was fraught as was help with housekeeping as agencies struggled to keep staff and everyone grappled with staying safe and healthy. Care for loved ones seldom suffered, but wear and tear on those providing it was significant. Self-care options also became scarce as fitness centers, classes, and pools closed and some caregivers weren't comfortable with in-person services like massage.



The situation is improving significantly but many are left shell-shocked nonetheless. The need for caregiver respite is more urgent than ever. Fortunately, funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has increased the amount of funding available to the Caring for Caregivers Program for 2022. We will be able to help a greater number of Dane County caregivers get the respite needed to help them sustain their role as caregiver for their loved one.

Caregivers interested in applying for a *Caring for Caregivers Grant* in 2022 may begin contacting me the week of December 13. At that time, I will be scheduling assessment appointments beginning in January 2022 (I will also be reaching out to those who were on the waiting list for 2021). The majority of assessments are conducted by phone for caregiver convenience and privacy, and to accommodate more people in a timely fashion. The process includes collection of the information required for submission of the application for approval. In an effort to provide adequate respite for caregivers that allows for a meaningful break, the discussion will focus on how to help make that happen.

Some caregivers may be in need of a vacation, so the grant would help fund a stay for their loved one in assisted living while they take a week away. For some it may be a personal emergency response system to provide peace of mind to a caregiver for a relatively independent care partner. Relative caregivers, including grandparents raising grandchildren, may need after school programs or options for family activities like a family YMCA membership. Other caregivers may need an assistive device or home modification to make a positive change.

In 2022, there will be no fixed dollar amount assigned to individual grants. Instead, a concerted effort will be made to do what is possible to provide respite that replenishes our truly exhausted caregivers. These have been extraordinary times and the Dane County Caregiver Program is concentrating effort on preventing caregiver burnout. The Caregiver Program also has some funding that is earmarked for underserved populations and communities of color that have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic.

At the end of her opinion piece in *The New York Times*, 87-year-old Dr. Etsy says we don't have to focus just on survival. It's also critical to focus on living a full life. After her many years of living she shares that she knows what matters most to her is enjoying time with the people she loves. Caregivers need our support in order to find time and space to enjoy what matters most to them. During the holiday season, consider reaching out to caregivers you know and offering them your support. As things open up, however slowly, don't forget those who are selflessly caring for the most vulnerable people in our community.



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Caring for Caregivers

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\**The New York Times*: "[I'm 87, Triple Vaxxed and Living My Life Again](#)" by Katharine Etsy, accessed 11.19.21





# CAREGIVER TELECONNECTION



[www.caregiverteleconnection.org](http://www.caregiverteleconnection.org)



## A LEADING VOICE FOR CAREGIVERS

Date	Time	Topic
Thursday December 9	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	<b>Dear Lucy: A Caregiver's Story with Lucy Barylak, MSW and Claire Wester</b> <i>Claire Wester is a caregiver for her mother who has Alzheimer's Disease. Listen to Claire's inspiring story of how she faced the challenges as well as burnout and what she did to overcome these. Claire and Dear Lucy will discuss what to look for as well as tips on how to advocate for yourself as well as your loved one.</i>
Friday December 10	12:00 pm Eastern 11:00 am Central 10:00 am Mountain 9:00 am Pacific	<b>Online - Cómo celebrar las fiestas cuando la vida se ha visto afectada por la pandemia con la Dra. Liliana Oakes</b> <i>Los últimos años han sido un desafío para muchas personas. Únase con la Dra. Liliana Oakes, ella compartirá ideas a los cuidadores de familia e amistades que proveen cuidado a un ser querido enfermo; encontrar momentos de alegría y paz durante la próxima temporada navideña.</i>
Monday December 13	1:00 pm Eastern 12:00 pm Central 11:00 am Mountain 10:00 am Pacific	<b>Managing the Holidays: Interactive Discussion about How to Cope with Zanda Hilger, LPC</b> <i>Join in a yearly interactive conversation about holiday activities when you are a caregiver. What are your challenges, what has worked for you in the past, what have you had to change from traditional celebrations, and how do you balance caregiving and self-care?</i> <b>**Sponsored by the North Central Texas Caregiver Teleconnection**</b>
Tuesday December 14	12:00 pm Eastern 11:00 am Central 10:00 am Mountain 9:00 am Pacific	<b>Planning a Holiday Trip to see a Loved One with Evalyn Greb, LCSW</b> <i>Holidays are exciting yet can also be stressful. Caregivers going to see their loved ones may be especially stressed. Join this session to hear some tips for preparing emotionally for such a trip, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic from a professional and other caregivers.</i>
Thursday December 16	2:00 pm Eastern 1:00 pm Central 12:00 pm Mountain 11:00 am Pacific	<b>Online - Holi-Daze or Holidays? Your Choice A Survival Guide for the Self Aware with Dr. James Huysman, PsyD, LCSW</b> <i>For some family caregivers, the holidays can be a joyful time when spirits are lighter. It feels good to care for loved ones and enjoy time together, celebrating with family traditions. But for many the season ends up being the Holi-Daze, bringing stress, anxiety, the blues and self-doubts. Something's gotta give! Make sure it's not you! Join Dr. Jamie Huysman as he shares tips to help you enjoy more and stress less this holiday season.</i>
Tuesday December 21	12:00 pm Eastern 11:00 am Central 10:00 am Mountain 9:00 am Pacific	<b>Online - Grief with Tam Cummings, PhD</b> <i>Grief over the disease, grief about the holidays, grief about the current pandemic, we are all grieving in some manner. Let's get together and discuss what is happening to us, why we feel the way we do and how do we find our way back.</i> <b>**Sponsored by VITAS Healthcare**</b>



**A program of the WellMed Charitable Foundation**  
 Register online [www.caregiverteleconnection.org](http://www.caregiverteleconnection.org) call 866.390.6491 Toll Free

## Two Jobs, No Breaks: Employed and Caregiving

There are 792,000 people in Wisconsin who provide labor and support to make sure an older adult or person with a disability can continue to live in their own home while working a part or fulltime job. Another 408,000 family caregivers are not in the workforce; 52% reported giving up employment to meet family caregiving needs.



[Click here or on the photo above to view the video.](#)

### Quick Facts About Employed Family Caregivers:

- Nearly two thirds of family caregivers are employed, 60 percent work full time.
- 40 percent of family caregivers are employed part-time.
- Many need employment that fits around their caregiving schedule.
- 71% of caregivers reported cutting back hours.
- 42% turned down a promotion.
- Many family caregivers have jobs with no paid leave or unpaid leave options.
- 52% reported giving up working.
- Nationally, family caregivers lose \$522 billion in income each year

Add your voice and tell your legislators what family caregivers need. You can tell your caregiver story here: <https://p2a.co/cx0fstc>.



### WPR The Morning Show:

#### [How family caregiving affects workforce participation](#)

To learn more listen as Lisa Schneider, Executive Director of the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin, and Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator at the Elder Law & Advocacy Center join host Kate Archer Kent to talk about the effect of family caregiving on the state's workforce. Aired November 19, 2021.

## Monthly MIPPA Moment: Fighting the Flu

December 5-11 of 2021 is ***National Influenza Vaccination Week*** this year. The CDC recommends that anyone over the age of 6 months get the flu vaccination. Getting vaccinated is especially important for those who are at a high risk of experiencing flu-related complications. These groups of people, among others, can include adults over the age of 65; those with asthma, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and cancer; and those with heart disease. If these people get the flu, they are at a high risk of getting other illnesses. These include pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus infections. The flu makes chronic health problems, such as asthma and heart disease, even worse. Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) covers one flu shot per flu season. The “flu season” can run from as early as September to as late as January sometimes. Outside of this time frame, coverage may not be approved in some circumstances.

Your costs in Original Medicare: You pay nothing for a flu shot during flu season if your doctor or other qualified health care provider accepts assignment for giving the shot: <https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/flu-shots>. Getting your flu shot also helps prevent you from spreading the flu to others. You still have time to fight the flu. The flu shot is more important than ever this year, so get yours today.

*For more MIPPA Program information, call MIPPA Program Specialist, Leilani Amundson, at 608-240-7458. This project was supported by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services with financial assistance, in whole or in part, by grant number 2101WIMIAA, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201.*

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



Warner Park by Jane De Broux



# FREE Virtual (Online) Welcome to Medicare Seminars

**Sponsored by Area Agency on Aging of Dane County's  
Elder Benefits Specialist Program**

## What you need to know about enrolling in Medicare

If you are turning age 64 this year, we can help you make informed choices about your Medicare options! You'll receive accurate and detailed information from unbiased experts in benefit programs.

**January 22, 2022, 9-11:30 am**

Email [aaa@countyofdane.com](mailto:aaa@countyofdane.com) register by 1/13/22

This seminar will be offered via Zoom.

**Additional Dates:**  
**(Location: TBD)**

March 19, 2022  
May 21, 2022

July 16, 2022  
September 17, 2022

November 12, 2022



**Connecting People with the  
Assistance They Need**

Monday through Friday  
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**(608) 240-7400**

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Email: [ADRC@countyofdane.com](mailto:ADRC@countyofdane.com)

Click on the button to follow the ADRC on  
facebook.





**December 1st, 2021**

**10 a.m.—11 a.m.**

**Toll Free!**



# LET'S CONNECT!

## CALL IN PROGRAM FOR SENIORS

### ***Dementia & The Holidays***

*Learn about the basics of dementia with Rose Kearney from the Alzheimer's & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin and Audrey Warrington of the Aging & Disability Resource Center. Learn how to make holidays and visits the most meaningful for people with dementia, as well as friends, family, and caregivers. We will discuss navigating caregiver stress and managing changes.*

**Call: 1-833-558-0712**

**Then dial access code:**

**199 641 6875 ##**





**December 15th  
10-11 AM  
Call in Program**

## ***Let's Connect! ~ Music and the Brain***

The brain is the most complicated structure that we know of in the universe. Not bad for a 5 pound collection of cells and fluids that sits in the quiet darkness of our skulls! And from that organic lump comes our experience of the heroic heights of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and the earthy grind of the Delta Blues. Join Dr. David Mays for a journey into the brain and how music moves us.



Dr. David Mays, M.D., Ph.D., is a licensed physician in the state of Wisconsin. He is Board Certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology.

He is a clinical adjunct assistant professor in the University of Wisconsin Department of Psychiatry. He is a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and member of the Wisconsin Psychiatric Association.

**Call:  
1-833-558-0712**

**Access Code:  
199 195 6932 ##**



## Healthy Aging: Stepping Up Your Nutrition

**Did You Know? Malnutrition can cause muscle loss and dizziness and increase your risk of falls. 19% of independent older adults are at risk.**

You may be at risk if you are: losing weight without dieting, not getting enough to eat, losing muscle strength, have two or more chronic conditions, or not drinking enough fluids.

JOIN US FOR A 2-HOUR **STEPPING UP YOUR NUTRITION** WORKSHOP TO LEARN:

- How nutrition affects falls
- Why muscle matters
- How to get enough protein and fluid
- What you can do to eat better and improve your health



Oregon Area Senior Center  
Thursday, January 20: 1-3 PM

Cost: *FREE*

To register, contact Anne Stone  
608-835-5801 OR [astone@vil.oregon.wi.us](mailto:astone@vil.oregon.wi.us)





**Did you know that over half of women age 50 and older experience issues with bladder or bowel control at some time in their lives?**

**Mind Over Matter: Healthy Bowels, Healthy Bladder** is a workshop designed to give women the tools they need to take control of their bladder and bowel symptoms.

The workshop consists of three 2-hour sessions that meet every other week. It provides information and group activities along with simple exercises and dietary changes to practice at home. Even if you don't have leakage symptoms now, it's never too early or too late to think about your bladder and bowel health!

### **What will I learn in the workshop?**

- ◆ Information about bladder and bowel control
- ◆ At-home techniques and exercises to help prevent or improve symptoms
- ◆ Tools to help you set goals and mark your progress

**Researched and proven to reduce bladder and bowel leakage!**

**This workshop will be held online via Zoom. Fridays at 1 – 3 PM**

**January 21, 2022**

**February 4, 2022**

**February 18, 2022**

**The workshop cost of \$20 includes educational material that will be mailed to you prior to the workshop.**

**To sign up, call (608) 512-0000 ext. 3002**

# Aging with Pride: IDEA

Innovations in Dementia Empowerment and Action  
The Goldsen Institute - University of Washington

## Part of the LGBTQ Community?

LGBTQ & Memory Problems Research Study

A virtual study that may help those who have Alzheimer's, dementia or memory problems.



### Why should you participate?

- It's **TOTALLY FREE!**
- Advance health opportunities for people in the LGBTQ community who have Alzheimer's, dementia or memory problems in the comfort of your own home.
- Get coaching from trained coaches in problem-solving, improving communication, and a gentle exercise program designed to improve physical functioning.
- Get up to \$125 for completing telephone assessments.

### Who can participate?

- Pairs participate in this study. One of the pair has Alzheimer's, dementia, or memory problems and is 50 years old or older. The other is their care partner.
- At least 1 person of the pair must be LGBTQ.
- Neither is currently living in a long-term residential care setting (i.e., nursing home).
- Pairs participate in virtual coaching sessions for 6 weeks.

#### About the research center:

The Goldsen Institute at the University of Washington is an innovation hub that researches vulnerable populations and creates interventions to improve their health, wellness, and longevity. The Goldsen Institute is dedicated to building a world where all ages thrive throughout their lives.



Take the first step  
Scan the QR Code to Learn More

Connect with the research team at [ageidea@uw.edu](mailto:ageidea@uw.edu)  
Questions? Give us a call! 1-888-655-6646