

# The Importance of Caregiving

Articles for Caregivers

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**T**here is a long held, but mistaken belief, that Americans do not care for family or friends as do other nationalities around the world. Statistics prove that to be untrue, as approximately 85% of caregiving in the United States of vulnerable adults with disabilities, debilitating diseases, mental health disorders, and extreme frailty is provided by unpaid caregivers including family, friends, and neighbors. Statistics also indicate that at any time, 5% of adults in the United States who are in need of support receive that support outside the home in a supervised setting.

While there continues to be unrecognized and undocumented caregiving provided in the United States, it is known that 43.5 million adults in the United States provided on average 21 hours per week of unpaid care per the 2015 report conducted by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. The high degree of stress reported by 46% of the survey respondents in this study indicated that the stress sometimes resulted in lack of care for their own health needs. Not only does the care provided by the unpaid caregivers enhance the quality of life for the adults impacted positively receiving this care, it has also relieved a tremendous strain that would have otherwise been on the health care system, community supports, and economy of communities, if the caregivers did not give of their time and support.



Caregiving involves reciprocity, while often being physically and emotionally challenging, there are also rewards of gratefulness, receiving care in return from the vulnerable adult, and acknowledgement of the importance of the support provided. Linda Ojeda, Ph.D., relates in her book “*Her Healthy Heart*”, that nurturing, caring, and providing support creates a positive chemical reaction in the body similar to physical exercise, thus potentially reducing the risk of heart disease. Caregivers themselves rarely discuss the “burden” of caregiving, a term used by sociologists and others.

Caregiving includes delivery of meals or groceries; tending to household chores; spending quiet time with an isolated older adult; accompanying them on doctor’s appointments; and picking up needed medicines, as well as the thousands of other tasks that improve quality of life for each one of us. Many caregivers provide care at the risk of reducing their own incomes as these are often unpaid hours needed at unpredictable times making full-time employment for a full-time caregiver very difficult.

There are supports and services available, based on eligibility and needs of the care-

givers. Please contact the Oneida County Office for Aging/Continuing Care at (315) 798-5456, Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm, or visit our website at <http://www.ocgov.net/ofa> for a full list of programs, services and contact information.

Because caregiving is so essential for the well-being of older adults and all of our communities, the Oneida County OFA/OCC will be submitting many articles with tips and information on caregiving in 2017.

Remember to honor and thank a caregiver every day. If you are a caregiver, honor yourself for the contributions you give every day to your loved ones and your community.

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Oneida County Office for the  
Aging and Continuing Care