

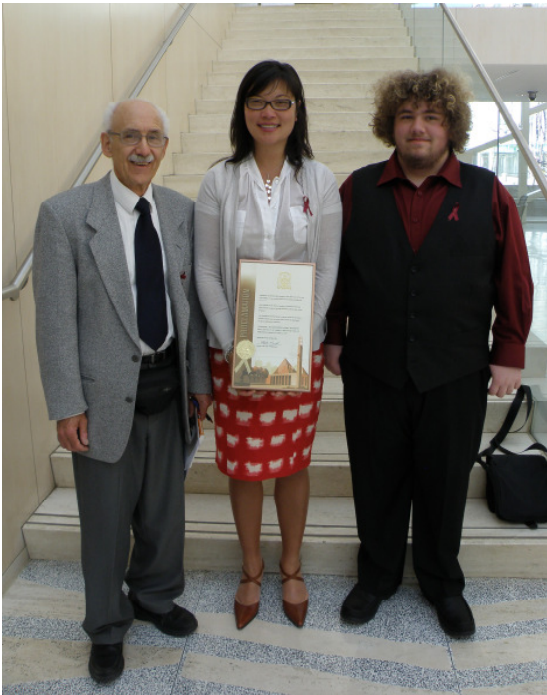


# Caregiver Contact

-A Publication For Alberta's Family Caregivers

Summer 2011

## Edmonton Mayor Mandel Proclaims Family Caregiver Week



Caregivers Jerry, Sue and Daniel show off the Mayor's Proclamation

Caregiver Celebration Day kicked off Family Caregiver Week on May 10th with a proclamation from Councillor Jane Batty on behalf of Mayor Stephen Mandel. The Alberta Caregivers Association was excited to host the event where caregivers were recognized as an essential part of Alberta's health care system and congratulated on their commitment and compassion.

ACGA Associate Director, Bonnie Hoffmann declared the event a success, saying, "Caregiver Celebration Day is a huge step towards recognizing the twenty-five percent of Edmontonians who are family caregivers and integrating their needs into public policy".

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Health and Wellness and Dr. Earle Waugh, University of Alberta, spoke to the vital role caregivers play in long term care and to the physical and mental strain of caregiving. They also stressed the importance of continued support for caregivers.

The event's highlight was the words of Sue Yi-Austin, who along with Jerry Shaw and Daniel Moores accepted the Proclamation on behalf of all caregivers, saying, "Caregiving is not an obligation or a burden or a restriction—although at times it may certainly feel that way. ..most of all, it is a selfless act that requires time and energy but is driven by love and devotion". Patricia Jackel, a caregiver for her husband echoed Sue's sentiment saying "My love for my David made it possible, not easy, but possible to get up every morning".

## What's New at the ACGA

### In This Issue:

- |                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| • What's New at the ACGA          | 2  |
| • COMPASS Committed to Your Town! | 4  |
| • Caregiver Support Team          | 5  |
| • Volunteer Shout Out             | 6  |
| • Events & Programs               | 7  |
| • A Sign of Hope                  | 8  |
| • Make Time for You—Self Care     | 9  |
| • Submissions Contest             | 10 |

Here's what we've been up to over the last few months!

### Meet our Caregiver Blogger

My name is Teresa. I was a caregiver for my mother until she passed away last summer. I am from a big family, so I wasn't alone in the many ways that she needed help, but of course my relationship was unique, and one of a kind.

I often took my mother to a senior's centre where I was introduced to the Alberta Caregiver's Association. Taking the compass program in the spring of 2009 really helped me in my future. It gave me practical tips and things to consider. It helped with stress and knowing that the leader

and the participants were part of this same journey. I am excited to write articles for the new Alberta Caregivers blog site which we hope will offer you a lot of help and support. I am a volunteer, and I work closely with the staff to bring you this new resource. *To read Teresa's blog, please go [www.albertacaregivers.org/blog](http://www.albertacaregivers.org/blog)*

### New Senior Friendly Font!

Have you noticed the Contact's new look? The ACGA is committed to making its resources accessible to seniors. We are now using a senior friendly font to make the Contact easier for everyone to read.

### A Special Thanks

A big thank you goes out to our volunteers for Caregiver Celebration Day! We couldn't have done it without you! Thanks also to Hole's Greenhouse for their generous donations and Above and Beyond Healthcare for their support and sponsorship!

**HOLE'S**<sup>TM</sup>  
Enjoy Gardening

 **Above and Beyond**  
Health Care Services Inc.

## New Community Engagement Coordinator

Emily was born and raised in St. Albert but as soon as she got the chance she took off around the



world. Emily loves exploring new cities and has spent time in Tanzania, Kenya, and Italy. While in Tanzania, she worked with local health professionals to stop the spread of

Malaria, Tuberculosis, and HIV. After returning to

Canada Emily worked at the University of Alberta tackling students' health concerns. Emily is excited to be working with caregivers, volunteers and staff, and hopes to learn a lot at the ACGA!

## A Big Move

The ACGA office is now located in a new space in Fulton Place Building. We are excited to have room to grow and are working on setting up our new community room. Drop by to visit us, grab some resources or have a cup of coffee; we'd be happy to have you over!

## Wish List

We are looking for items to make our community room feel a bit more homey.

Tool kit with a small drill

Gently used or new couch or chair set

Coffee table

Decorative plants

Fridge

Digital projector

Cappuccino machine

If you have any of these items to donate contact Emily at 780-453-5088 to arrange pick-up or drop-off.

## Check Us Out Online!

Social Media allows us to send out updates to let you know about things happening in our office. It's a new way to engage with caregivers, professionals & politicians!

*'Like' us on Facebook at*



**Facebook.com/  
AlbertaCaregivers**

*Follow us on Twitter at*



**Twitter.com/  
ABcaregivers**

## COMPASS Committed to Your Town!

**“This program is different from other workshop classes. COMPASS is a group guided experience with individual insight.”**

- COMPASS Facilitator Trainee

The importance of caregivers learning to take care of themselves was identified as a critical need at the 2010 Caregiver Consultations. The ACGA is working to expand its COMPASS program into more provincial communities to assist rural caregivers. These folks have a much harder time accessing resources and support than do their counterparts living in urban areas.

The COMPASS Program is an 9 module workshop most often facilitated by a past caregiver. Along with their fellow participants, caregivers explore the emotional journey of caregiving and discover how to practice self-care. The workshop has been

running in Edmonton since 2005 and has recently begun in Calgary. Making COMPASS available in rural areas is a priority for the ACGA in the coming months. Programs are already underway in Lethbridge, Cardston, and Barrhead.

Master Facilitator Patricia Ogilvie just completed a training program for COMPASS facilitators from across Alberta including Grande Prairie, St. Paul, Innisfail, Edson, and Hinton. The ACGA is teaming up with organizations in these areas. The Parkinson’s Society, the Cross Cancer Institute and the Alzheimer’s Society all have trained COMPASS facilitators. Ogilvie called the participation level at the training exciting, “these health leaders want to offer this program to everyone who cares for someone. COMPASS is exactly what family caregivers need to take better care of themselves so they can take care of the people they love”.

If you are an organization interested in partnering with the ACGA to host a COMPASS workshop, or if you are a caregiver looking to attend a workshop in your area contact Lori Simon at 780-453-5088 or toll free 1-877-453-5088 or by email:

lsimon@albertacaregivers.org



## Caregiver Support Team

Alberta Caregivers Association and ElderCare Edmonton formed a partnership in 2009 in order to link their services and programs for caregivers. Together, we recognized many benefits in working collaboratively to better support caregivers in our community. Caregivers were better informed on services and supports that the organizations offered.

The benefits of this collaboration were making a difference to caregivers however; we recognized that there are many organizations that offer wonderful programs and services for caregivers. Therefore; we decided together to see if other organizations would be interested in joining the team. In November 2010, we jointly hosted three roundtable events to explore the possibilities of expanding our Caregiver Support Team to include a wide range of service providers. The feedback from the roundtables was very positive with many agencies wanting to become involved. Following the formal invitation that was sent in early December, we received strong support in joining the team.

January 2011 marks the expansion of the Caregiver Support Team to include more than 31 professionals representing 28 agencies. The Care-

giver Support Team aims to link health professionals and service providers to better serve caregivers (and those they care for) in our community. The team is made up of those community agencies providing necessary services to caregivers or who have identified the need for services for caregivers. The purpose is to network, share expertise, facilitate problem solving, expedite the referral process, identify gaps in service, and develop strategies to build, support, and strengthen opportunities to enhanced caregiver services in the community.

Collaboratively these organizations are currently working on education and awareness. The first goal was to learn from each other about the services and supports we offer caregivers. Raising awareness so caregivers know more about all of these services is the first project which will be a cross agency's initiative via; newsletters, displays, presentations, and handouts for caregivers. This project is to begin in September 2011. Currently the team is in the process of evaluating their first six months together. This new initiative brings professionals together to work towards enhanced service delivery for caregivers.

## A Sign of Hope

I am a mom who has experienced times of both hope and low hope, throughout my journey caring for my son who had severe brain damage and physical disabilities. I say *had*, as he passed away a few years ago, at the age of 12. His 18<sup>th</sup> birthday would have been this weekend. We will still have a party.....I don't know if I would be planning this party if I was without hope.

I never really thought about *hope* during my care-giving years, but in hindsight, I see that I allowed my hope to gradually ebb away. Each 'crisis' seemed to drain me a little more. It was not until after my son died that I found the time to see a counsellor who recognized my hope was at a very low level. The first thing she helped me with was bringing about an awareness of hope and its importance.

I went home from the counsellor thinking "What do I hope for? Can't she see that's the reason I am there – I don't really hope for anything". Well I made a list, actually a collage depicting it. I really didn't feel hope for any of my choices, but cognitively, I knew that they were things important to me. My counsellor spoke with me about my choices.



She was keeping "my hopes" in sight, so I didn't just let them go.

**"I remember to actively hope"** Gradually over the next months, I realized that I was taking small steps towards some of the hopes for which I had some control. She didn't ask me to do anything; I just made my list and we talked about its items. I believe this started a domino effect in a positive direction, exactly the opposite of that which had claimed my hope. Hope led to more hope!

Another activity I found beneficial was discovering my "signs of hope" – sights, smells, sounds – that bring a sense of hope. Whenever I experience these signs, I remember to *actively* hope. Sparrows give me hope that I will be with my son again one day.

*Continued on page 10...*

## Make Time for You— “Self Care”

We often hear this term ‘self care’ but really what does it mean and how do we put it into practice in our already very busy lives as caregivers?

Self care involves being aware of your own physical and psychological needs. Having a greater understanding of what brings joy in your life, what helps you feel rested and ready for the next day all contributes largely to a sense of well being and good health. As caregivers we not only need to be aware, we need to take consistent action in our personal commitment to self care in order to put the ‘steps’ in motion.

Where to begin? One suggestion is to create a list by writing down the things that bring you joy in life; maybe it is reading, going for a walk, or taking time to enjoy a coffee with a friend. The bottom line is to do something you love and if you are not sure what that is then take time to discover what that might be.

Caregivers often express feelings of guilt to be away from their care recipient and don’t like to ask others for help. We all need time off from our responsibilities and it is not self-ish to do so. When you are feeling good about yourself you are in a bet-

ter place to provide care for someone else.

Now that you have your list written down – I would like you to write down three wishes for yourself. Pick one wish and then being to explore the steps you need to make it come true. Wishes can be viewed as signs of hope for: a better tomorrow, new beginnings, positive change, and an opportunity to give ourselves permission for something else. Find a picture that illustrates your goal for your self care and place it in a visible location.

You can find many books on the topic of self care, websites that address the signs of caregiver stress and suggestions on what to do. The information is all around us – for some it is having the motivation and the acceptance that caregivers have a right to hope, dream, and most important to take action.

So start today, what is the one thing this week that you can do to take the first step in your own self care?

*By Lori Therrien, Caregiver Advisor  
780-453-5088 or  
ltherrien@albertacaregivers.org*

*Continued from page 8...*

It was only a few days after he passed away, when a sparrow flew into the house. A bird had never flown into our home before or since.

Unsure of what to do, I grabbed a large empty juice jug and put it on its side on the floor next to him. I thought I would have to "capture" him, but he just hopped right in. He did not flutter as I walked him to the backyard. In fact, the jug had no lid and I was able to look in on a very calm little bird. When we got to the deck, I put the jug onto its side again and the sparrow hopped back out and stood on the deck's railing. I am sure it was at least 5 seconds in which he stood inches from my face looking at me, before he flew away.

### **Noel's Suggestions for Hope**

- 1) Make a list of hopes, even if you don't feel them, and remind yourself of them regularly. Encourage fellow caregivers to discover those buried hopes, even when you don't feel like it.
- 2) Find your own "signs of hope" that will remind you that there is hope every time you witness it.

*To read Noel's complete story visit [www.albertacaregivers.org](http://www.albertacaregivers.org)*

## **Submissions Contest**

### **Caregiver's Guide for Canadians**

In this practical and comprehensive book on eldercare, Rick Lauber draws from his caregiving experience with his father to offer caregivers advice on what to expect and how to deal effectively with difficult caregiving situations. Lauber has included an extensive list of web resources as well as numerous checklists and worksheets designed to make the task of caregiving more manageable.

If you would like a chance to **win a copy of Rick Lauber's book** Caregiver's Guide for Canadians, send us a submission for our next newsletter. We want to hear your caregiving story, words of wisdom, or caregiving tip.

Send us your submission by **August 15th, 2011** and your name will be entered into a draw for Rick's exciting new book!

Email your submission to Emily at [evespi@albertacaregivers.org](mailto:evespi@albertacaregivers.org) or mail to:

ATTN: Emily Vespi

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