

Caregiver looks back to find alternatives

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make the latter years of the frail ones of quality, in addition to quantity. Many times this responsibility falls to the daughter, wife, or daughter-in-law, and is a very important issue to be addressed.

With the Certificate of Need (issued by the Michigan Department of Public Health) restricting the addition of beds in the nursing homes, the number of options are being reduced for the elderly patients being discharged early from acute care hospitals to recuperate.

Often times finances dictate the choice to be made as skilled nursing facilities can cost in the range of \$3,000 per month when any therapy is required.

This can place a great burden on the caregivers — most often a burden willingly and readily accepted but nonetheless very wearing.

There were times at the day center, particularly noticeable when the husband or the daughter-in-law was the caregiver, that anger and/or resentment would sometimes rear its head. Most often the caregiver, without enough respite from the one they are charged to care for, reaches the point of either verbal or physical abuse.

Having worked with both the families and the frail elderly, I can understand and appreciate the tension that can occur — the total frustration in dealing with someone who, through no fault of their own, are very demanding of your time and energy.

THIS IS WHERE resources must be made available in the community. When possible, the elderly person does best in their own home setting. In the earlier stages of deterioration, sometimes it just takes someone to drop in and visit or purchase groceries, or Meals on Wheels to supply their needs. This is certainly a most cost-effective, humane service to provide.

More and more housing is being made available for the elderly who are no longer able to or don't wish to maintain their own homes. Homes for the aged are another alternative for those who need the amenities that come with congregate housing, i.e. a nurse on call, meal service, someone on hand when any need arises. But all these cost money — often times more than is available to the individual or family.

Even with all these options, the need will probably never be fully met, and we will always have the frail elderly living with the nuclear family.

More must be done to encourage and facilitate the preservation of the caregivers. Without their involvement, the cost of caring for the frail elderly will be staggering, both in terms of finances and the emotional wear-and-tear.

I have in the back of my mind that perhaps we should encourage the old-time concept of the boarding houses — an extended family if you please. A place where people can come together to share their financial and emotional resources. Perhaps including a young mother who is trying to make it on her own so she no longer has to resort to a latch-key but will have built-in grandparents who can serve milk and cookies and read a story until mom returns from her job.

This extended family could enable individuals to remain active participants in the community, delaying or reducing, if not eliminating the need for additional services for many of the aging population.

Above all, we must work on the solution of the survival of the caregivers. If we lose them through overwork, unmet respite time, or just plain burn-out as can surely happen, then we have lost one of our most precious natural resources, the family member who really wants to be a caregiver.



'Nutcracker Ballet'

Jean Huang (left) takes the role of Clara and Stephanie Dexter dances as the Sugar Plum Fairy when Michigan Ballet Theater stages its 20th anniversary production of "Nutcracker Ballet." Curtain is at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6, and at 1:30 and 7 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 7, in West Bloomfield High School. The dancers

will be accompanied by Birmingham Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra conducted by Felix Roenick. Reserved seats are \$10 and \$12, or \$8 and \$8 for students and seniors, available by calling Kreson-Okar Dance Academy, 869-9444.

clubs in action

BETHANY TOGETHER, an organization for the divorced and separated, sponsors a dance party from 9 a.m. to 1 a.m. Saturday in Acorn VFW Hall, Fourth and Troy streets in Royal Oak. Live music provided by The Diamonds. Admission is \$6, which includes beer, set-ups and snacks.

OAKLAND COUNTY YOUNG REPUBLICANS meet for a dance party at 9 p.m. Saturday in Tap-

peronee's, 1824 14 Mile Road, at Crooks. Admission is \$3 at the door. The group's hotline number is 543-5757.

FOUNDATION FOR ILEITIS AND COLITIS, Michigan Chapter, sponsors its second annual Young Adults Conference 1-4 p.m. Saturday in Crittenton Hospital, Rochester. The conference is given for young people who suffer from ileitis and inflammatory bowel disease.

A panel of young adults will lead discussions on school, friends, medication, surgery, marriage, pregnancy and physical activity. Inquiries are taken by the chapter's office, 424-8558.

FARMINGTON GARDEN CLUB meets at 11:30 a.m. Monday, Dec. 1, in Farmington Community Center for its annual Christmas luncheon and meeting, followed by a sing-along, led by Catherine Gaul.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DISORDERS ASSOCIATION begins a support group for

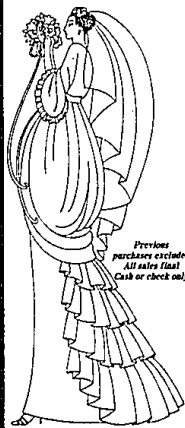
caregivers at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 2, in the living room of Farmington Nursing Home, 30405 Folsom Road. Inquiries will be taken by Carolyn Darling, who will lead the group, 477-7400.

All club news and announcements for this column are to be addressed to: Club Circuit, Farmington Observer, 33209 Grand River, Farmington 48024. The information must arrive before noon on the Monday before Thursday publication.

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