Alzheimer's group asks for caregiver relief

Lawmakers are being asked by the Alzheimer's Association to provide family caregivers with support, after a new study by the association showed that they are contributing \$196 billion a year to the nation's health care sys-

tem.
According to the study, this "invisible" health care sector—the family and friends who provide care at home for the chronically ill — contributes an amount that dwarfs the cost of formal home health care (\$32 billion) and nursing home care (\$38 billion). In Michigan, carejivers are providing services worth over \$7 billion to long term care.

term care.

The Alzheimer's Association presented the data to Congress March 23 in order to "underscore the importance of acting immediately to provide family caregivers the support they need," said Dian Wilkins of the Alzheimer's Association Detroit Chapter, It will also be presented to governors and state legisla-

Petition includes \$1,000 family federal tax credit

tures.
The Association is calling on

Provide a \$1000 federal tax credit for family caregivers.

credit for ismily caregivers.

Authorize and appropriate
\$125 million a year to help
states and communities expand
respite and adult day care and
other caregiver and support ser-

M Provide for the chronic health care needs of Medicare beneficiaries through prescrip-tion drug coverage and an ade-quate home care benefit.

Wilkius said such actions would not only help families but also reduce costs for Medicare and Medicaid.

"We know that timely services like respite and solul day care can extend the ability of families to provide care — sometimes delaying nursing home admis-sions by almost a year. Even a month delay in nursing home

placement can save \$1,863 per person — and that adds up to savings of more than \$1 billion a year in the costs of Alzheimer's care.

"There is no way we can assure the future of Medicare or control the costs of Medicaid if we let the family caregiving system collapse."

Other research shows that one in eight caregivers becomes ill or injured as a direct result of caregiving and that older caregivers are three times more likely to become clinically depressed than others in their age group.

others in their age group.

Employers also have a stake in a reliable structure that relieves the burdon of caregivers. A September 1998 study commissioned by the Alichimer's Association revealed that caregiver absenteeism and lost productivity related to their absence costs employers \$33 billion a year.

Wilkins and one-third of the

Wilkins said one-third of the

\$196 billion can probably be attributed to Alzheimer cure-givers.

givers.

The study is titled "Economic Value of Informal Caregiving in the United States, by States," It is an analysis of state data from a national study published in the March/April 1999 issue of Health Affairs magazine.

The study was conducted by

The study was conducted by Peter S. Arno, Ph.D., and Margaret Memmott of the Montainer Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Carol Levine of the United Hospital Fund.

pital Fund.

The Alzheimer's Association is the only voluntary national health organization dedicated to conquering Alzheimer's disease through research and to providing information and support to people with Alzheimer's disease and their families. The Detroit Area Chapter provides a wide range of services to Alzheimer patients and their families. To contact the local chapter in

To contact the local chapter in Southfield, call (248)557-8277.

Association holds caregiver workshop

A three-part free caregiver workshop will be held in May by the Alzheimer's Association Detroit Chapter

workshop will be held in May by the Alzheimer's Association Detroit Chapter.

The May 6 (6-8 p.m.) program will be devoted to basic information about Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias. May 12 (6-8 p.m.) will be concerned with communicating with a memory-impaired person, and dealing with difficult behaviors. The May 19 (6-8 p.m.) workshop will be devoted to community resources and legal and financial considerations.

The workshop is at St. David's Episcopal Church, 16200 W. 12 Mile road in Southfield Roads.

The workshop is presented as a part of the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Caregiver Education Project funded by Michigan Department of Community Health and United Way. Call (248) 657-8277 to register.

Daily, skilled aid is highest level of nursing home care



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They are a lw a y s talking about levels of care.

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RANLER

RANLER

RENEE
RANLER

Confused and don't emple answer.

and don't simple answer.

A. There are three levels of care that I will try to define for you as simply as possible. The highest level is skilled nursing care, the type you would find in a nursing home. Skilled care must be administered daily by licensed medical personnel be they physicians, nurses or therapists. The care must be determined to be medically necessary to the patients well being. Skilled care can also be restorative in nature. That means that after receiving treatment or physical or occupational therapy the person will hopefully return to the state of health they enjoyed prior to their need for skilled care. Intermediate care is very much libe skilled care but this type of care is not usually necessary on a daily basis. Custodial care refers to assistance with such petivities as bathing, dressing, eating, grooming or walking. People requiring custodial care from nursing assistants or other non-professional health care workers.

Q. I live in Birmingham.
My father, who is recovering from a stroke, is coming to live with me. His left side is paralyzed, his speech is not good and he is depressed. I have no idea how to properly care for him. Is there an organized group that will not only help him but that invites families to attend also?

A. The Birmingham Area Seniors Coordinating Council has a support group specifically for stroke victims and their families. BASCC also has support groups for people with hearing or vision loss, an Alzheimer's Families who have a member living in a nursing home.

In addition, this very active center offers a wide variety of programs and activities for older adults including hot meals, information and referral services, housing information, home delivered meals, telephone reassurance and legal councils and information and services call (248) 642-1040.

On Aging columnist Rence Mahler in a gerontologist and a format manual of the

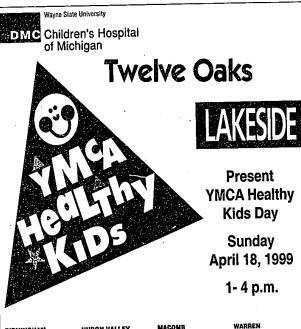
On Aging columnist Renee Mahler is a gerontologist and a former member of the Michigan State Commission on Services to the Aging.

To leave a message for Mahler, from a touch-tone phone, call (313)953-2047, mailbox 1869.

Send your questions to her at The Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.







BIRMINGHAM 400 E. Lincoln Street Birmingham, MI 48009 (248) 644-9036

DOWNRIVER 1211 Fort Stre Wyandotte, Mi 48192 (734) 281-2600

FASTSIDE 10100 Harper Ave Detroit, MI 48213 (313) 921-0770

FARMINGTON 28100 Farmington Road Farmington Hills, MI 48334 (248) 553-4020 HURON VALLEY 305 Caroline Stree Milford, MI 48381 (248) 685-3020

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MORTHWESTERN 21755 W. Seven Mile Road Detroit, MI 48219 (313) 533-3700

SOUTH OAKLAND 1016 W. Eleven Mile Road Royal Oak, Mi 48067 (248) 547-0030 will he held April 10

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