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Coastal Companion Care Communicator

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Patricia and Patricia: Angels in Your Home

Patricia Jordan and Patricia Lunsford are two women who put the “care” into caregiving. Both relocated to the Southport area from Gaston County, North Carolina. Both have long tenures with Coastal Companion Care; know loss and tragedy; bring unique gifts to their work; and love caring for others. Both are currently providing care for World War II veterans.

A resident of Southport for nine years, Patricia Jordan moved to Southport to be with her oldest daughter and her newborn baby. In addition to filling her new role as grandmother, the professional timing was good. The health care company in Gaston County where she worked downsized, so Patricia took the leap.

She was drawn to caregiving while working in a local thrift store where she noticed a lot of older people in wheelchairs and walkers. “I was very good with them. I was a magnet. They’d come straight to me for help.”

Patricia explains, “My parents died when I was 16. I became a mom at 19. I am a single parent. I’ve been taking care of people all my life.”

One day a nurse wandered into the thrift shop and suggested to Patricia that she contact Coastal Companion Care. Three years later Patricia is still going strong as a caregiver.

Caregiving lights up Patricia’s life. “I love my job,” she beams while saying that the people she cares for
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Director of Operations Mike Ramsey anticipates serving a wide range of transportation needs.

Coastal Companion Care Drives Forward

Now well into his second year of leadership at Coastal Companion Care (CCC), Mike Ramsey looks proudly on company accomplishments and looks forward to lofty goals.

“We’re not a franchise. We can be more personal with people,” Mike notes. He believes this fact improves quality of care and ability to make a difference in people’s lives. In Mike’s first year, he and the CCC staff increased visibility, service hours and profit for CCC.

Part of that profit resulted in the purchase of a Chevrolet HHR, a trendy vehicle that features excellent cargo space, versatility and the best fuel economy in its class. The vehicle accommodates wheelchairs and will expand CCC’s ability to answer customer needs while also serving as back-up transportation for caregivers and administrative staff.

Mike’s greatest accomplishment, however, is increasing the quality of life for people as they age. “Just look at all these thank you notes,” Mike says, pointing to a vast collection posted on the office door. One card says it all: “My many thanks for making it possible for me to live at home.”

Continued growth, expansion of services, purchase of another vehicle, and increased benefits for staff top Mike’s goals for 2013.



SENIOR HEALTH & LIFESTYLES

Taking Care of Loved Ones – Don't Go It Alone

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people age 50 and over dedicated to enhancing quality of life for all during the aging process.

The following information on caregiving is summarized from the November 2012 AARP Bulletin and the January 2013 Magazine.

Those caring for an older family member know the frustrations well: fear of “the call” reporting a turn for the worst; sibling tension; and conflicts among providing needed care and one’s own family needs, employment and personal time. In spite of the devotion, tenderness, gratitude and sense of purpose that comes with caregiving, most caregivers confront three distinct and difficult experiences.

Grief

Even though their loved one is still alive, caregivers often grieve the loss of the person they once knew.

The 95-year-old who used to read a novel a week can no longer see well enough to read, and gone are the conversations about favorite books. Hearing impairments, loss of mobility, and memory issues all make it hard to be out and about with your loved one. Past enjoyments are gone as is the life you shared. The grief is perpetual.

One way to face grief is to find new ways to relate. Substitute the three-hour movie with other things to enjoy together: music programs, grandchildren’s events,

storytelling, painting or any activities that bring mutual joy.

Author Sally Abrahms, knowing that her mother always loved poetry, read children’s poems to her mother that her mother had once read to her. “She’d smile as we finished the lines together and I felt close to the mother I remembered while relating to the person she had become.”

Guilt

Caregiver guilt is constant as caregivers think they don’t give enough time to their loved one, neglect their own families, and fail to pull their loads at work. Resentment builds.

Barry J. Jacobs, a psychologist and author of *The Emotional Survival Guide for Caregivers*, says it is important to accept the negative feelings: “You love the person you’re caring for, but you hate the caregiving. That’s normal.”

Manage guilt by asking for help. Reach out for education and support; investigate respite programs, in-home care, transportation services, and elder care benefits from your employer.

Guilt is unavoidable, but recognizing and managing it can help caregivers avoid health issues of their own.

Exhaustion

Regular caregiving of an older family member can be depleting. A physical drain occurs from

medical appointments, and from a myriad of other caregiving tasks. The mental toll adds to the exhaustion and can sap energy to get through the next day.

Caregivers need to heed two principles: be strategic in setting limits; recruit help.

Hire outside help. Involve other family members and/or neighbors and friends. A relative who lives far away can pay bills online. Out-of-town children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and great grandchildren can schedule trips to visit an older family member in need and to give the fulltime family caregiver a break.

As Psychologist Barry J. Jacobs notes: “When family members do pitch in, everyone feels like a team. Caregivers feel supported and more resilient; family relationships become stronger, more enduring.”

Stress Busters

- **Batch cooking** – make large batches of all-in-one meals; freeze smaller portions.
- **Meditation** – 12 minutes a day can dramatically improve mental health.
- **Healthy snacks** – stockpile healthy foods (fruits, veggies, nuts) that you can grab on the run to boost energy.
- **Slow down** – To avoid accidents and stress, don’t rush.
- **Volunteer** – Helping in a different way, in a different setting, can be gratifying and therapeutic. Those who volunteer live longer.
- **Sleep habits** – Anxiety is higher if you are fatigued. Adopt good sleep habits (dark room, no distractions).



SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

Patricia and Patricia

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become her friends. “I get attached. I think about them. I worry about them. I am helpful to them, but they are also helpful to me. They give me a window into the future.”

There’s not much Patricia won’t tackle. Beyond the standard tasks, she rakes yards, takes care of animals, plans entertaining outings, and keeps a supply of birdseed for those trips to the park.

Carroll Wooge, a World War II fighter pilot in the European Theatre, has enjoyed Patricia’s caregiving for over two years. Enriched by his family (two children, eight grandchildren and a newborn great grandbaby), he also appreciates Patricia: “I am blessed.” As Patricia gets Mr. Wooge’s coat to whisk him out the door to a doctor’s appointment, he adds, “She’s a good driver, too.”

Always ready to fill in for other caregivers, Patricia also knows the importance of maintaining her

energy to be ready for each person she visits. Her job is to raise spirits. The message on one thank you card -- “I wouldn’t know what to do without you” – is proof that Patricia does, indeed, raise spirits.

Caregiving has always been part of Patricia (“Pat”) Lunsford. At age 13 she cared for her grandmother to help her remain in her own home until her death at age 86. Pat moved her mother-in-law from a nursing home into her own home to live out her life in the neighborhood she had known and loved for over 50 years.

Pat moved to the Southport area in 2004 to be with her son. A car accident took his life two months later, and two years later Pat lost her 78 year-old father who fell and died of a punctured lung. It’s not surprising that the hardest part of caregiving for Pat is losing those she cares for. In her five years

with Coastal Companion Care, Pat has cared for five people to the end of their lives. Pat’s understanding of loss and grief, her sensitivity to others, patience, her strong work ethic and compassion endear her to families. They depend on Pat and love her as their own. Enid Shea, a retired Naval officer, nurse and mother of five who has been in Pat’s care almost five years, attests to this: “Thank God for Pat. She’s family.”

One man in Pat’s care was an extremely slow eater who offered to pack up his meal so he and Pat could leave the restaurant. Pat insisted they remain and enjoy conversation and each other’s company while he finished. Two hours later, he said: “I want to thank you for letting me do that.” Pat is masterful at brightening people’s days with simple pleasures. She prides herself at getting people out and about “wheeling around town.”

The evidence of appreciation for Pat is on the smiles of faces. This is Pat’s greatest reward: “When I leave, they are smiling or laughing. It makes me feel good about myself. I know I’ve made a difference.”



Caregiver Pat Lunsford (left) with Enid Shea



Carroll Wooge (left) with caregiver Patricia Jordan

When an old man died in the geriatric ward of a nursing home in an Australian country town, it was believed that he had nothing left of any value. The nurses went through his meager possessions and found a poem he'd written. They distributed it to every nurse in the hospital. One nurse took her copy to Melbourne. The man's bequest to posterity has since appeared in many publications, slide presentations and across the internet.

Cranky Old Man

What do you see, nurses? What do you see?
 What are you thinking when you're looking at me?
 A cranky old man, not very wise,
 Uncertain of habit with faraway eyes?
 Who dribbles his food and makes no reply.
 When you say in a loud voice: "I do wish you'd try!"
 Who seems not to notice the things that you do.
 And forever is losing a sock or shoe?
 Who, resisting or not, lets you do as you will,
 With bathing and feeding the long day to fill?
 Is that what you're thinking? Is that what you see?
 Then open your eyes, nurse. You're not looking at me.
 I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still,
 As I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will.
 I'm a small child of ten with a father and mother,
 Brothers and sisters who love one another.
 A young boy of sixteen with wings on his feet,
 Dreaming that soon now a lover he'll meet.
 A groom soon at twenty my heart gives a leap,
 Remembering the vows that I promised to keep.
 At twenty-five, now I have young of my own
 Who need me to guide. And a secure happy home.
 A man of thirty my young now grown fast,
 Bound to each other with ties that should last.
 At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone,
 But my woman is beside me to see I don't mourn.
 At fifty, once more babies play 'round my knee,
 Again, we know children my loved one and me.
 Dark days are upon me. My wife is now dead.
 I look at the future. I shudder with dread.
 For my young are all rearing young of their own.
 And I think of the years and the love that I've known.
 I'm now an old man and nature is cruel.
 It's jest to make old age look like a fool.
 The body, it crumbles. Grace and vigor depart.
 There is now a stone where I once had a heart.
 But inside this old carcass a young man still dwells,
 And now and again my battered heart swells.
 I remember the joys. I remember the pain.
 And I'm loving and living life over again.
 I think of the years, all too few, gone too fast,
 And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.
 So open your eyes, people, open and see.
 Not a cranky old man. Look closer. See ME!!

Caregiver's Bill of Rights

Coastal Companion Care works closely with families to care for their older loved ones. This partnership reveals that family caregivers in being kind, caring, and good intentioned may compromise their own wellbeing.

Today's Caregiver (www.caregiver.com) is a magazine and website for, about and by caregivers. A free magazine subscription is available through the website.

The Caregiver's Bill of Rights by Jo Horne, condensed below, is on the website and states that a caregiver has the following rights:

- To take care of myself. This is not an act of selfishness. It will give me the capability of taking better care of my loved one.
- To seek help from others even though my loved ones may object. I recognize limits of my own endurance and strength.
- To maintain facets of my own life that do not include the person I care for, just as I would if he or she were healthy. I know that I do everything that I reasonably can for this person, and I have the right to do some things just for myself.
- To get angry, be depressed, and express other difficult feelings occasionally.
- To reject any attempts by my loved one to manipulate me through guilt and/or depression.
- To receive consideration, affection, forgiveness, and acceptance for what I do as long as I offer these qualities in return.
- To take pride in what I am accomplishing and to applaud the courage it has sometimes taken to meet the needs of my loved one.
- To protect my individuality and my right to make a life for myself that will sustain me when my loved one no longer needs my full-time help
- To expect and demand that in our country strides will be made to aid and support caregivers.