

Caregivers, remember to take care of yourself

It is appropriate today and every day to express our appreciation and admiration for caregivers. The faces of caregiving in the United States today represent every race, ethnicity and religious sect. Caregivers can be found in virtually every Zip code!

Whether you are a family caregiver or a professional caregiver, you have a very important job to do.

Sometimes one of the first and most difficult jobs of a caregiver is helping his loved one accept assistance where needed, while still empowering the loved one to remain as independent as possible, wherever possible.

The old saying, "A little bit of help goes a long way," is very appropriate when applied to caregiving situations.

The caregiver may be involved in the care of someone in a variety of ways — everything from personal care like bathing to meal preparation.

Many care recipients have a very negative view of accepting assistance, seeing it as a weakness or loss of control instead of a positive means to maintain their functional abilities and dignity, so they can remain

in their homes for as long as they can while still staying safe.

At times, caregivers tend to take care of everyone but themselves. It is very important to remind caregivers that if they don't take care of themselves, they will not be able to care for their loved ones.

The airlines make a very good point of instructing people to first fit themselves with the oxygen mask before helping the person next to them. It is the same principal in caregiving.

There have been many instances where caregivers have worn themselves out making it impossible to care for their loved ones. When you are in the caregiver role, remember to find ways to care for yourself.

The Senior Center is certainly no stranger to caregiving! Our mission, to develop and implement or promote programs and services that support the dignity, physical, intellectual and emotional health

Silver Threads

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of senior citizens in the Sheridan County area, offers many programs to aid in the success of a caregiver.

Our In-Home program serves several hundred individuals with homemaking and personal care. The Family Caregiver program provides support,

education and respite to many families.

Our adult day program, Day Break, provides a safe and supportive environment for caregivers to bring their person for the day.

The Senior Center also has many other programs available from public transportation, Home Delivered and congregate meals to the senior companion program, as well as many social activities.

In keeping with our strong belief of "taking care of the caregiver," the Senior Center is sponsoring a Family Caregiver Conference for persons providing care to another individual.

The conference will provide information on topics such as Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, handling stress, medications, home care and hospice, and end-of-life decisions.

Our keynote speaker, Jo Huey, is the author of two great caregiver "must reads," titled "Alzheimer's Disease: Help and Hope" and "Don't Leave Momma Home with the Dog."

The conference is scheduled April 21 and 22 at the Best Western Sheridan Center. Please call me at the Sheridan Senior Center at 672-2240 for further information.

Or go to the Senior Center's Web site, www.sheridanseniorcenter.org, where you can download the conference brochure and obtain other pertinent information.

Again, as a caregiver, remember to take care of yourself in order to give great care to your loved one. Be sure to join us for an educational and fun conference.

Stella Montano is director of family caregiver services at the Sheridan Senior Center. "Silver Threads" is a weekly column written by people involved with the Senior Center.