

**Save the Dates and Pre-register Early!**  
**Call Merrimack County ServiceLink Resource Center!**  
**603-228-6625 or 1-866-634-9412 Toll Free**  
**“As Families Grow Older” Educational Series 2009**

Four consecutive Thursdays in June for family caregivers living in Merrimack County. Pre-registration is required. Dates and Topics include:

**June 4, 2009 - The Elephant in the Room: Discussing Wishes before the Crisis** - Presented by Pattie Hayes and Frank Byrne, Home Instead Senior Care

**June 11, 2009 - Guardianship and Durable Power of Attorney:**  
Whose decision is it anyway? Presented by Mary McGuire, Esq., State of NH, Bureau of Elderly & Adult Services

**June 18, 2009 - Faith in Caregiving:** Presented by Mary Beale

**June 25, 2009 - Care in the Community: Identifying Support in the Community Before You Need It:** Local organizations will provide you with the tools you need to be prepared when you need them.

**Merrimack County ServiceLink  
Resource Center  
P.O. Box 1016  
2 Industrial Park Drive  
Concord, NH 03302-1016**

# Merrimack County Caregiver Newsletter



Are you a caregiver for a loved one, friend or client? If you answered yes, this newsletter is for you. Each quarter this newsletter will offer critical information and resources related to caregiving to support you and the ones you care for.

**More inside on:**

- Local and national resources for caregivers*
- Assessing stress*
- Safety when managing medications*
- Family Meetings, what are they?*
- Preventing falls - are you afraid to fall? Or are you afraid someone you know will?*
- The latest update on the Merrimack County Caregiver Coalition - join today!*



The following websites have resources and helpful information for caregivers. If you have internet access, consider visiting them to see what national resources are available. If you receive this newsletter electronically, simply click on the links. If you receive this in print format, type the following website addresses into your internet browser.

**Websites for Caregivers**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <a href="http://www.alz.org/index.asp">http://www.alz.org/index.asp</a> | <a href="http://nfcacares.org/">http://nfcacares.org/</a> |
| <a href="http://www.caregiving.org/">http://www.caregiving.org/</a>     | <a href="http://www.nahc.org/">http://www.nahc.org/</a>   |
| <a href="http://www.agenet.com/">http://www.agenet.com/</a>             | <a href="http://caregiver.com/">http://caregiver.com/</a> |

ServiceLink Resource Centers are community centers throughout the state that offer information referral and assistance for older adults, adults with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and for those who love and care for them. The ServiceLink Resource Center program was created to provide easier and better access to the kinds of resource information that help people to live fully and to enable them to learn more about their options and to make plans that support their independence.

**ServiceLink** has a lending library including caregiving resources at your local ServiceLink Resource Center. ServiceLink for Merrimack County is located at 2 Industrial Drive, Concord, NH 03301. Feel free to stop by to see what materials we have or call our office at **603-228-6625 or 1-866-634-9412**. The library includes materials on caregiving, Alzheimer's and dementia, and many other topics related to seniors and adults with disabilities. More resources can be found online at [www.servicelink.org](http://www.servicelink.org)

**Is the Stress of Caregiving Getting to You?**  
*Submitted by: Patti Hayes, Community Liaison  
Home Instead Senior Care 603-668-6868.*

Family members who take care of loved ones with memory disorders and other ailments also need to take care of themselves. The first step toward good health is recognizing your stress level. If you are a family caregiver responsible for the care of a senior with Alzheimer's disease or some form of dementia, try taking the informational stress test at [www.caregiverstress.com](http://www.caregiverstress.com) to gauge how this stress is impacting your health. Here are four sample questions:

- Am I satisfied with the support I receive from other family members?
- Are my loved one's needs becoming overwhelming?
- Do I seem to be getting ill more frequently?
- Are my friends and family saying that I'm getting too "stressed out?"



Answer each question utilizing the following scale:

Strongly agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

Upon completion of the survey, you'll receive a *complimentary stress assessment*, as well as tips, advice and links to resources. If you are concerned about the safety of your home or a recent fall, contact your physician immediately and ask for a home safety assessment.

### Caregiver Support Groups

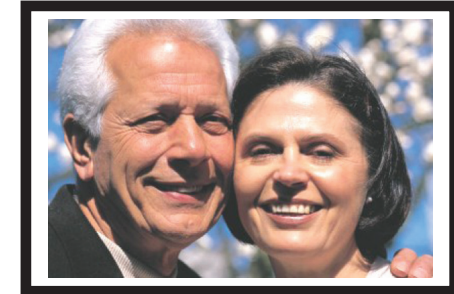
**Caregiver Support Group-** TLC Medical Daycare - Courtyard Square, 211 Loudon Road, Concord, NH 03301. 603-224-8171 Third Thursdays of the month from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. March 19th, 2009, 5:30 - 6:00 *Taking Care of the Caregiver* Presentation following the regular support group. Discussions will include easing caregiver stress, and tips for caregiving.

**Caregiver Support Group-** GENESIS HEALTHCARE - MOUNTAIN RIDGE CENTER 7 Baldwin Street, Franklin, NH 03235 603-934-9491. Quarterly from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. Upcoming meetings: 6/10/09, 9/9/09, and 12/9/09.

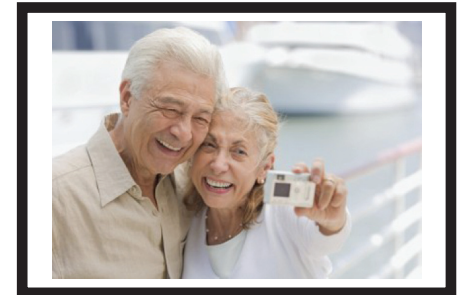
Are you looking for a new support group in your area for caregivers or one on a particular topic you haven't seen? Let us know by sending an email to: [dsemp@mcservicelink.org](mailto:dsemp@mcservicelink.org) Or calling our local office at **603-228-6625**. Ask for the Caregiver Specialist.

## Merrimack County Caregiver Coalition

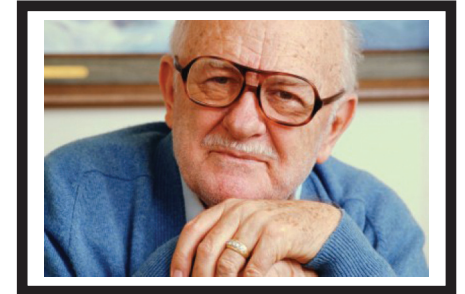
**Are you a caregiver?** Would you like to meet others in similar situations? You could learn about new resources and gain support.



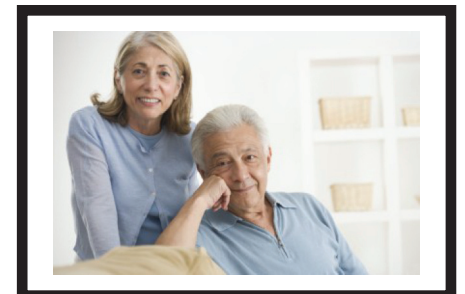
We meet on the fourth Wednesday of each month to create awareness of community resources and services and to promote an understanding of the impact that caregiving has within our homes and families.



Caregivers and providers of related agencies are encouraged to participate.



For more information, please contact Merrimack County ServiceLink at 603-228-6625  
1-866-634-9412 or email [dsemp@mcservicelink.org](mailto:dsemp@mcservicelink.org)



### Meeting Time:

**4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month from 1:30-3:00 p.m.**  
**Please call for current meeting location.**

## Are you afraid your loved one will fall or have they fallen?

### Preventing Falls in the Home

*Submitted by: Jennifer Brechtel, Concord Regional VNA 603-224-4094*

According to the *Centers for Disease Control*, one in three older adults fall each year in the United States. In an instant these falls can change the life, health and independence of a person or their caregiver. Listed below are some suggestions on how to make your home safe:

- Look for items that could cause a fall, such as area rugs that slide around easily or areas of carpet that are not level.
- Use nightlights to make a well-lit pathway from the bedroom to the bathroom.
- Organize work areas so that frequently used items are within easy reach (not lower than the knees or higher than the shoulders).
- Remove clutter by moving infrequently used items to storage. Get rid of excess items.
- Use a raised toilet seat, toilet frame bars or a commode if the toilet seat is too low to easily transfer to and from it.
- Ensure the bottom of the bathtub has a non-skid runner or strips to prevent falls on the slippery surface of the wet tub. Also, make sure the bath mat outside the shower is skid resistant.
- Keep walkways clear of tripping hazards such as low furniture, toys and electrical or telephone cords.
- Make sure your stairway railings are sturdy, waist high and easy to grasp along both sides of the stairway.

### Caregiver 2008 Celebration Update

The Coalition helped to sponsor the fifth annual Merrimack County Caregiver Celebration on November 19th, 2008. There were over 60 people in attendance. The keynote speaker Janet Edmunson spoke about affirmations for caregivers. For more information on Janet, please visit her website at: [www.findingmeaningwithcharles.com](http://www.findingmeaningwithcharles.com).

### Comments from participants included:

- “The main speaker was really good and informative. Great.”
- “To have so many organizations here explaining what is available for services.”
- “Janet Edmunson’s talk. Exposure to multiple resources beyond my own extensive searches.”
- “Knowing that I’m not alone.”

### Website Development!

The Coalition has developed a new website as another way of providing information and resources to Merrimack County Caregivers and for improving collaboration among members. Please stay tuned for website updates as they unfold. The website can be found at: <http://merrimackcountycaregivercoalition.weebly.com/>

## Safety Tips for Caregivers

### When Managing Medications

*Submitted by: Victoria Chapman  
Director of Elder Services*

**Community Bridges 603-226-3212**

More than 2.3 million drug-related errors adversely affect older Americans each year, often resulting in rush trips to the emergency room, expensive hospitalization and subsequently, the potential decline of a senior citizen’s independence. The following steps are recommended to ensure Caregivers are managing prescription drugs properly and economizing in ways that are safe and not harmful:

1) Bring current prescription medications at least once a year to your primary care doctor’s office and have them reviewed to verify that each medication is still useful and appropriate, and to ensure that the combination of medications is safe.

2) Store medications properly at home. A dry place such as a kitchen cabinet or bedroom are the best storage locations as long as the medications are out of reach of children or safely locked away.

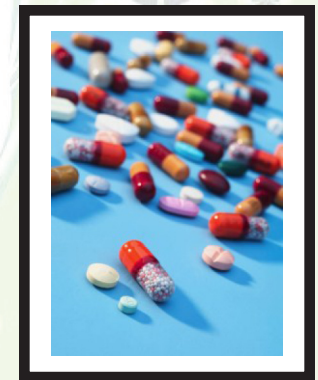
3) Keep the appropriate medication in the correct bottle. Don’t mix different medications in the same bottle to save space or for traveling, for example.

4) Check medications several times a year to make sure they have not expired.

5) Ask your pharmacist how to properly dispose of unused medications.

6) Develop a relationship with your local pharmacist to consult with questions about the proper use of medications and possible drug interactions. If you are using a mail order pharmacy, you can consult with one of the pharmacists by phone.

7) For chronic conditions, find out if your benefit program offers a mail order pharmacy for refills of medications used to treat them.



8) Check with your health plan or pharmacy to see if they offer other cost-saving opportunities such as discount cards for prescriptions or over-the-counter medications at the local pharmacy.

9) Although it may appear to be an attractive way to save money, do not order drugs from unknown Web sites. Order only from a Web site through your own health plan or retail pharmacy that provides password protection for its members.

## Family Meetings and Elder Care Planning

Submitted by Keliene Totten, Granite Ledges of Concord 603-224-0777

Caring for a frail senior is never an easy task. Caregiver and care recipient meetings are one way that can help to improve care. A successful family meeting should be well organized, well attended and carried out with respect and good communication.

### *Why hold a family meeting?*

It is common for siblings and caregivers to feel that individually they are doing more than his or her share while others are not. Family meetings provide an avenue for caregivers to express their feelings about their role and perhaps their expectations of others in a safe respectful setting.

### *Who should be at the meeting?*

It is always important to include those people who are concerned about their loved one. Depending on family dynamics, it can vary from family to family as to whether or not they would like to have their loved one present. It is key to remember that by including the care recipient you may be more likely to have a knowledgeable and beneficial outcome. Social workers or other healthcare professionals are also often included in these meetings and can be a wealth of knowledge and resources for caregivers.



### *Tips for a family meeting agenda*

- Be as inclusive as possible, inviting as many members of the family as possible.
- Recognize that every person at the meeting will have a very different idea as to what is most important.
- Be respectful but be frank.
- When asking the care recipient questions, do not assume you know the answer, keep questions open-ended - their response may surprise you!
- Review the agenda ahead of time with all those involved.

Remember that the meeting is about the future; keep the focus on moving forward. The family meeting may not solve every problem but can be a step in the right direction. Take notes, set a follow-up meeting and keep the lines of communication open!

## Educational Offerings-

### **“Downsizing from a Home to a Two Bedroom Apartment”-**

Tuesday, March 31st, 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Kathy Ashton, CRTS, of Home Transitions LLC

Location: Granite Ledges of Concord, 151 Langley Parkway, Concord, NH

- \* Starting to think about which items to “release”
- \* Putting together an implementation schedule
- \* Floor plans
- \* Managing your important papers - what to keep and what to toss
- \* Focusing on your new living space

For more info call Keliene Totten at 224-0777

### **Community Bridges Monthly Educational Series-**

Tuesday, April 21, 2009, 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

A representative from the NH State Veterans Council will present information on VA benefits available to Veterans and their spouses that you might not know about.

Location: Community Bridges, 2 Whitney Road, Concord. To register, please call Victoria Chapman at Community Bridges 603-226-3212, ext. 377 by April 17 Light refreshments will be served free.

### **Senior Wellness Fair-**

April 30, 2009, 8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Local Vendors, Health Screenings, and Educational Opportunities for seniors to learn more about optimal health and how to make it a lifestyle.

2 Guest Speakers:

Dr. Fitzmorris, Orthopedic Physician from LRGHealthcare will speak from 10:00 - 10:30 a.m.

Dr. Nesham, Chiropractor from Tilton will speak from 11:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Location: TRIP Center - 20 Canal Street - Franklin, NH 03235

A collaborative effort with Mountain Ridge Center, Franklin Regional VNA, LRGHealthcare, TRIP Center and Merrimack County ServiceLink. [www.geneshcc.com](http://www.geneshcc.com)

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### **Side by Side for Independent Living**

Prime Time and the National Alliance on Mental Illness, NH are pleased to offer the following series of educational sessions for family members and other caregivers of older adults experiencing symptoms of mental illness. Sessions will be held on Fridays, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at the Prime Time Center for Positive Aging. Registration is FREE (pre-registration required). For more information please contact Bernie Seifert at 603-714-1737.

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### **Save the Date! Annual Coalition of Caring Conference November 4th, 2009**

Lake Opeche Inn and Spa Laconia, NH For more information contact Ellen Edgerly at 332-9891 or see <http://coalitionofcaring.org> Information on the conference and a caregiver blog.