



*Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.*

## **REAL EXPERIENCES**

### ***Area Agencies on Aging Assist Families Caring for Older Adults***

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#### ***From St. Johnsbury, VT***

April H is a daughter, mother and a grandmother who traveled out of state to see her granddaughter graduate from nursing college. It took considerable planning for her to be able to go on this trip, including needing a live-in respite provider to care for her mom and help from friends and family. April herself has overcome many physical health issues that still prove challenging, but with assistance through the Area Agency on Aging, she is able to provide the care needed to keep her mother at home.

#### ***From McAllen, TX***

Donna, a resident of Ankeny, IA, a recent retiree and a 61-year-old grandmother, traveled to McAllen, TX, not for a vacation, but due the urgencies of her elderly parents. She visited a community health fair with a to-do list of things her parents needed, including basics such as a weekly housekeeper and furniture rearranged, to more complex and important necessities such as finding a dentist and an eye doctor closer to her parents' home. Donna parents are in their mid-eighties with multiple health issues. By phone and email her mother would say things were ok, yet Donna knew there was more to the story. Like many long-distance caregivers, Donna had to travel in order to really understand their needs. Donna was overwhelmed and in great need to become familiar with local services.

Through contacts at the health fair, Donna received a needs assessment appointment, which she attended with her parents. A care advocate helped identify Alzheimer's care closer to home, discussed home safety issues to consider before making any home adaptation/remodeling and provided counsel to her mother on a range of concerns. Donna later writes: *Thank you so much for taking an hour and a half of your time to counsel my mom about the resources available to her as a spouse of a dear man with dementia. My mom has a long hard road ahead of her, but with help such as yours, it should be more bearable.*

#### ***From Island Pond, VT***

"I cried on the way to the first caregiver's meeting and took a deep breath. Finally I had found a support group especially for me—a meeting to help me cope so that I can continue having Mom live with me at home.

I am a handicap senior taking care of my 89-year-old mother who suffers with Alzheimer's, osteoporosis, C.O.P.D. and blindness. I've felt so alone, so responsible and her care weighed on my shoulders like a cement block. Every day I felt like I was sinking deeper into an ominous bottomless pit. The class turned out to be a lifesaver for me and consequently for Mom. I learned how to handle stress, guilt and overwhelming odds of survival. I realize today, that because of this intense program, I no longer feel like I am drowning with the possibility of leaving her stranded. Oftentimes I had felt I wouldn't survive long enough to take care of her. I learned that I am not alone and that others, in the same boat, were learning to manage in worse situations than mine."

***From Coeur D'Alene, ID***

Mr. D. has been the primary caregiver for his wife. He was excited to learn about the Family Caregiver Respite Program that would give him a \$1,500 voucher, allowing him to choose from in-home, adult day or institutional respite services for his wife. He quickly expressed gratitude and his case manager was relieved to know that Mr. D, who needed surgery, could now schedule an appointment knowing his wife would be watched over while his needs were being met.

***From St. Johnsbury, VT***

"For more than 10 years, I have been the caretaker to my mother Emma who is 82, and has Parkinson Disease and mobility issues from a major back reconstruction. She needs around-the-clock care for all daily-living activities. I also do a majority of her paperwork, bill paying, budgeting and such. Prior to Emma's need for care, we both had some savings and good incomes. As the years of paying out-of-pocket for care rolled by, our savings and the equity in my mother's home were entirely depleted.

I met with our local elder advocate to see if there was a way to keep my mother in her home. The advocate expertly evaluated our situation and recommended a plan of action. With her support and expertise we were able to quickly get about the task of applying for programs that my mother qualified for. From navigating us to the right programs to assisting us with the paperwork to apply for programs, the assistance we received translates to a success story that has enabled Emma to stay in her home and for me to provide care for her."

**Find Caregiver Support**

**Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Title VI Native American** aging programs are the trusted community link to information and services on a range of assistance for older adults and those who care for them. To identify these local contacts, visit the **Eldercare Locator** at [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov) or call 800-677.1116.