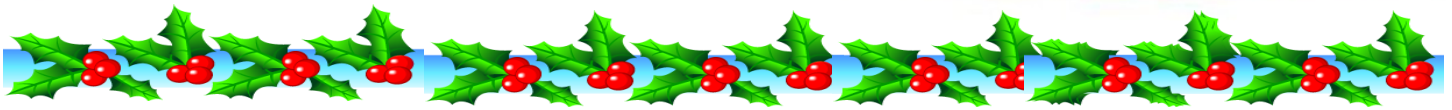


POLK Family Caregivers

Polk Family Caregivers Winter 2010 newsletter



Moving Forward

For several years now the largest funder of Polk Family Caregivers has been the County Board of Commissioners. Without their support, the organization would have a hard time continuing, but as we are all aware the economy is in serious trouble. Revenues are down, and those that fund us have been forced to tighten their belt and ask us to tighten ours for the upcoming new year. Unfortunately there is not much in our Christmas stocking this year. Like all agencies lucky enough to receive County funding, Polk Family Caregivers has had their funds cut by 50% for the upcoming year. We choose to be grateful that there is any continued funding at all. But while we are indeed grateful, we must also be realistic in how far that money will go and make wise choices about where to spend what little we receive.

Programs and services have been at an all time high this year, helping more 1,678 caregivers via the Care Line, conducting caregiving classes, hosting the Annual Family Caregiver Summit and Exposition and paying for the Caregiver Resource Elder Automated Helpline that receives over 150 calls each month, but the majority of inquiries from caregivers come to us through the technology of the internet at our website, www.polkcaregivers.org. The old website often received 1,500 to 2,000 inquires each month and the new one is even more successful.

There will be some staff cuts, there will be some program and service cuts. One very convenient little bit of technology that is going by the wayside is the "Constant Contact" email that enables us to send those monthly bulletins to you. It isn't free.

This year we have attracted new partners through Downtown Lakeland Rotary Club, Bright House and Disney giving us the stability to continue while other charities have faltered. But with the funding cuts, it is not going to be possible to give the Caregiver Summit this Spring. The cost of the summit is more than our entire annual County funding. But we will be here, day or night when you need us. We will even be adding some new (and inexpensive) programs such as the **Caregiver Welcome Wagon** that will come to your home with literally a bag full of information, gifts, coupons and resources to start you on your way if you are new to the taxing journey of caring for loved one.

Polk Family Caregivers directs family caregivers towards knowledge that can help to alleviate the stress associated with caregiving, sustain families and marriages, improve caregivers' health and well being, reduce the risk of abuse and neglect and minimize or delay the need for more costly out of home placement, all greatly improving the quality of life for the loved ones which we protect and care for. Polk Caregivers also serves as a network for caregivers to gain social supports and help stricken families realize that they are not alone. Times change and through our leadership and staff, we are flexible enough to change with them.

We look forward to continuing our friendship with you, the family caregivers of Polk County, who are doing such an outstanding job under such monumental challenges, and we wish you the best during this holiday season and upcoming year.

Getting a Good Night's Sleep

A room full of costumes, lots of healthy and delicious snacks to eat, and trick-or-treat bags full of goodies donated by local sponsors framed discussion at the October meeting of family caregivers. Guest speaker Kelly Andrews, Assistant Dean of Wellness at Florida Southern College, addressed a topic that weighs heavy on many caregivers, that of getting an uninterrupted nights sleep.



“Overall, your bedroom should be your sanctuary,” Kelly explained, “it should be the place in your home that you can go to for complete relaxation. Set the stage for the sleep you so badly need by seeing that the bedroom is free of computers, television and other distractions that signal your brain regarding activities other than rest.”

Some of the key elements to achieving good quality sleep:

- Total darkness assists in sound sleep;
- Set the temperature of your home at a comfortable level;
- Position yourself flat on your back for the most supportive posture position;
- Sleeping on your side puts strain on your pelvis and creates tension throughout your spine;
- Although we love them, pets are not a good idea for the bedroom at night.



Winner of the Caregiver Costume Contest was Laura Haw, who won a gift certificate for her delightful belly dancer costume!

Polk Family Caregivers extends their thanks to the many collaborating partners who stuffed the trick or treat bag with their promotional items. It was quiet the haul for caregivers and a good way to let them know how many agencies, businesses and organizations are available to help when it comes to caregiving.



Surviving The Holidays

It was a week before Thanksgiving and perfect timing for Temi Charrier of Home Instead Lakeland to explain helpful ideas to survive the stress that we are all too familiar with during the Holiday Season. One helpful tool was a simple questionnaire. See how you do when answering the following questions:

- ✓ Do you find yourself having a short fuse? Easily aggravated?
- ✓ Do you find yourself having emotional outbursts. Crying easily?
- ✓ Do you find yourself having problems sleeping? Not enough? Too much sleep?
- ✓ Have you had significant weight changes? Gaining? Losing?
- ✓ Do you find yourself lethargic? No energy?
- ✓ Do you have physical ailments? Headaches? Back pains?
- ✓ Do you find yourself socially isolated? Staying at home?
- ✓ Have you experienced family/friends complaining about you?

If you answer yes to several of these questions, it isn't because you are the Grinch, it is stress and most likely it is associated with the extra burdens of caregiving. Temi points out that you need to ask for help, ventilate, control what you can and accept what you can't. And our thanks to her for sharing her expertise.

Planning a Stress Free Holiday



The biggest contributor to stress is unrealistic expectations—those that others have of us and those we impose upon ourselves. Expectations of how the holidays should be may keep us from enjoying a period of simpler, more meaningful joys.

- Start with adequate time for pre-planning;
- Lay out a timetable and don't get caught in the feeling of being rushed to fit things in at the last minute;
- Pull from experience about previous holidays to define your planning;
- Try to eliminate reoccurrences of whatever has been draining and stress-producing;
- If family and friends will be involved in your current plans, propose and negotiate changes with them now, before schedules are set;
- Delegate. You don't have to do it all and you don't have to do it alone. Enlist others, set priorities simplify!
- Set limits according to your personal situation and the abilities of the loved one you are caring for.

Other ways to control holiday pressures...

- Eliminate stressful long-distance visits that you've made in previous years;
- If certain rituals trigger sadness, change them or create new traditions to replace them;
- Organize your gift list. Shop now to avoid crowded stores and out-of-stock items;
- Wrap and label gifts. Keep a list, but put items in a closet or at a friend's house;
- Create a list of food specialties you enjoy making, choosing only those that can be baked or cooked and frozen in advance;
- Begin making those items ahead and freezing them to be ready for holiday parties;
- Are you entertaining at home? Assign guests to bring dishes that must be prepared fresh, such as salad;
- Sometimes, family events may be too stressful. For some people, not being with family is actually a good idea;
- Make alternate plans, so you'll feel comfortable declining graciously;
- If you feel you must attend, line up friends to support you in person, by phone or via email;
- Don't volunteer for extra duties. Learn to say no.

The final (sometimes-crazy) days... if you start having symptoms of stress such as headache, diarrhea, anxiety, etc. as the holidays draw near:

- Listen to your body and slow down;
- Eliminate anything left on your to-do list;
- Get at least seven to nine hours sleep every night;
- Take daily walks with a friend, a dog or soothing music on your headphones;
- Take time for an exercise work-out. Your emotions and your body will thank you;
- And always good... any time... take a few deep abdominal breaths to calm yourself.



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More Tips for Coping with the Holidays

Remember the holiday season does not magically banish all reasons for feeling sad and lonely; sometimes holidays can seem to magnify those feelings. It can be a little easier to get through the holidays when you look for things to appreciate and focus your thoughts on those positive things:



- Stay close to family and friends who understand living with illness.
- Carefully take any prescribed medications.
- Be sure to get the sleep you need.
- Celebrate the holidays in ways that are comfortable for you.
- Don't compare this season with others. Enjoy all the little things you have now.
- Talk about the stress you feel with family and friends.
- Keep expectations manageable. Plan your work and work your plan.
- Set a budget and stick with it. You can give without spending money; a phone call to a friend may mean more.
- Do something nice for someone else. Do something nice for yourself.
- Stay out of department stores. They can be overwhelming.
- Play your favorite non-holiday music.
- Celebrate the New Year in a way that is comfortable for you.
- Reflect on positive memories from the past year and try to build on them.
- Don't allow yourself to dwell on the negative. Don't dwell on past losses. Live with what you have now and don't think about too far into the future.
- Do remember that there will be a difference between the ideal holiday image and the reality of one's life.
- Don't accept the role of victim – get out of the house if you can and enjoy the Florida sunshine and fresh air.
- Create new traditions and memories especially for yourself.

Blessings Upon the Caregiver



~Esther Mary Walker

Blessed are they who understand
My faltering step and shaking hand
Blessed, who know my ears today
Must strain to hear the things they say.

Blessed are those who seem to know
My eyes are dim and my mind is slow
Blessed are those who look away
When I spilled tea that weary day.

Blessed are they who, with cheery smile
Stopped to chat for a little while
Blessed are they who know the way
To bring back memories of yesterday.

Blessed are those who never say
"You've told that story twice today"
Blessed are they who make it known
That I am loved, respected and not alone.

And blessed are they who will ease the days of
my journey home, in loving ways.

A warm welcome and many thanks to new and
renewing collaborating partners

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Let Us Guide You

Polk Family Caregivers has created two very useful and complete guides for our family caregivers. You can access and download them through the website at www.polkcaregivers.org.

The Complete Guide To Caregiving was created especially for you, the caregiver. It's chapters address patience, planning and practice, how to search for resources, preparing your home, activities, meals and eating, behavior changes, communications, signs of caregiver stress and the well known Caregiver Bill of Rights.

The Complete Guide to Hiring Paid Caregivers is a 30 plus page booklet containing everything you need to know before hiring someone to help with your loved one. This includes WHAT Medicaid and Medicare cover, out of pocket and private insurance, public programs in Polk County, where to look for potential professional caregivers, recruiting and screening information, interview questions, how to obtain references, driving and medical record checks, bonding and homeowners insurance questions, written agreements, tasks to be performed, payments, taxes and other legal responsibilities, emergency contact procedures and sample forms.

Our thanks to Joe Campbell of the Polk Art Museum for his design of the Complete Guide cover and to Misty Powell, formerly of our staff for the design of the cover for Hiring Paid Caregivers.

These booklets are the result of the issues and questions most often asked in caregiving classes during the last two years. They are free downloads. We hope you will not only use them, but pass them along to friends.



Medicare's Annual Open Enrollment Ends Dec. 31!

Each year plans change what they cost and what they cover. During this time, it is especially important that people with Medicare choose whether they add, drop or change their prescription drug coverage. They can also select a health plan for their 2011 coverage.




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Proverbs as Told by First Graders

- Better to be safe than...Punch a 5th grader
- Strike while the ... Bug is close
- It's always darkest before... Daylight Savings Time
- Never underestimate the power of... Termites
- You can lead a horse to water but...how?
- Don't bite the hand that...looks dirty
- No news is...impossible

- A miss is as good as a... Mr.
- You can't teach an old dog new... math
- If you lie down with dogs, you'll...stink in the morning
- The pen is mightier than the...pigs
- An idle mind is...The best way to relax
- Where there's smoke there's... pollution
- Happy the bride who...gets all the presents
- A penny saved is....not much
- Two's company, three's... the Musketeers
- Don't put off till tomorrow what...you put on to go to bed
- Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and...you have to blow your nose.
- None are so blind as... Stevie Wonder
- Children should be seen and not...spanked or grounded
- If at first you don't succeed...get new batteries
- You get out of something what you...see pictured on the box
- When the blind leadeth the blind...get out of the way
- And the favorite: Better late than.....pregnant.



**Polk Family Caregivers
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Potluck Luncheon
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Polk Family Caregivers Elects New Officers

At the November 9th, 2010, Polk Family Caregivers Board meeting, the Annual Election of Officers took place. Here are the new Board of Directors members who will be leading the organization through their service and expertise during the upcoming year.

Mic Gunderson – President

Susan McGuire – Vice President

Grace Hardy – Secretary

Debbie Rydberg – Treasurer

Michael J. Heider – Member

Rebecca Renfroe – Member

Kim Andreadis – Member

Alexandra Lee - Member



Season's Blessings

This is the time of year when most of us are concentrating on spending time with family and loved ones, sharing gifts, visiting with friends, rushing to finish the last minute shopping, baking and making those crazy airport jaunts on the worst possible travel day of the year.

But for those of you in the people helping professions, such as case managers, social workers, home health aids, eldercare helpers, nurses, EMT's, counselors, hospice workers and other professional caregivers, holiday preparations most likely means something even more complicated. You are spending your valuable time making the bustling holidays better for others— many of whom you don't even know well— while leaving your own needs pushed into the background. You will deal with personal holiday demands with whatever left over bits and pieces of time and energy remain after all your clients, patients, patients' families and volunteers are cared for.

To you we say, ***Blessings Upon You***. This Holiday Season. Thank you from Polk Family Caregivers. Know that we are thankful for all of you and the help you bring to us.