

Caregiver Chronicles

April 2021



Caring for Caregivers

AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF DANE COUNTY
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608-261-9930



Spring will come and so will happiness.
Hold on. Life will get warmer.

—Anita Krizzan, Writer



Hold on. Life Will Get Warmer.

There are always some ups and downs to Spring in Wisconsin. People have already been outside wearing shorts—after all we’ve hit 50 plus degrees! Gardeners have been prepping and planning, and people are out and about strolling, running, and bicycling. However, along with the exhilaration that comes with the new season, is the knowledge that one more good winter storm remains a possibility. Those of us who’ve lived a lifetime in this climate know not to put away all the warm clothes, boots, or shovels—almost, but not just yet. We can see that the time is coming fast, and the winds have shifted, but the possibility of a brief winter resurgence is not yet passed.

Similarly, life in pandemic shut down is opening up. Vaccines are going into arms more quickly than we ever thought possible. An astonishing 75% of Wisconsin older adults age 65+ had at least one vaccination dose as of March 30, 2021. Beginning on April 5, all Wisconsin residents age 16+ are eligible for vaccination. This is cause for hope and celebration and more freedom than we originally expected at this point in time. But we are not out of the woods just yet. On March 29, President Biden urged Americans to continue precautions in order to avoid another surge of COVID-19 infections. We are very close to getting vaccines to where we need them to be, but there are still vulnerable people who need access. In order to reach our homebound Dane County residents the ADRC of Dane County, the Dane County Area Agency on Aging, and Public Health Madison & Dane County have a program in place to help (see page 6). There is also transportation for COVID-19 vaccinations available to Dane County older adults age 50+ at no cost (see page 7).

Because older adults, age 65+, have been the most vulnerable population to the COVID-19 virus they have often been the most isolated. Reuniting grandparents and grandchildren long separated by shutdowns and quarantines became a symbol of what has been missed so dearly and a representation of that joy appears on the cover of this issue. I’m quite certain those of us living through these times will never take access to our loved ones for granted again. At the same time, re-entry into something like the “Before Times” causes many of us, particularly those who have been most isolated, some level of anxiety. We’ve trained ourselves to view one another as a potential threat requiring protection and avoidance and some of us will feel a bit awkward when social connection resumes on a larger scale. Learning some coping strategies for common emotions can help with the transition. Caregiver Teleconnection has free learning sessions via phone scheduled for April to discuss coping with fear, anger, uncertainty, and processing sadness around losses during the pandemic (see page 8).

Caregiver support groups can also be an important resource for caregivers, particularly during this time. Jane Mahoney, Older Americans Act Consultant with GWAAR, lays out the benefits of an emotional support network in her article, *Find Support in Your Caregiving Role*, along with links to groups in Dane County and across the state of Wisconsin (page 3).

Finally, be sure to mark your calendars for the *Living Well with Dementia Resource Fair* scheduled for April 27 – 29. Along with a number of other presenters on a wide variety of living well topics, I will be presenting on *Sustainable Caregiving*, or how to plan and care for yourself over the course of your caregiving journey (see page 9).



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Caring for Caregivers

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Find Support in Your Caregiving Role

Talk to someone who provides care for their aging loved one and they will tell you what a stressful job it can be. The American Medical Association states the role of caregiving places demands on the caregiver that leaves them at risk for health problems including serious illness and depression. According to the *American Journal of Public Health*, middle-aged and older women caring for their spouses are six times more likely to suffer from depression or anxiety disorders than their non-caregiving counterparts. The result of this decline in health by the caregiver not only affects the person giving the care, but it may also compromise the care they provide for their loved one.

Information like this can make caregiving sound very bleak and discouraging. But we also know that caregiving can be a very rewarding job. The key difference between a caregiver who is barely hanging on and one who is managing is having proper support in their role as a caregiver. Healthy and content caregivers not only receive help with the ongoing responsibilities of providing care but they also have found an emotional support network.

The American Medical Association suggests to physicians that “a referral to a support group should be recommended for all caregivers.” Oftentimes, people hear support group and immediately tune out. They are uncomfortable with the idea of sharing their feelings. Or they think of a support group as a pity party or place to complain about their lives. But support groups are much more than that and the benefits they offer are valuable. Even amidst the pandemic, these groups continue to meet by phone or online.

The definition of a support group is a gathering (in person, by phone, or virtual platform) of people in similar situations who provide each other moral support, practical information, and coping tips. Their benefits include:

- **Providing valuable information to increase your caregiving knowledge.** One of the best resources for caregivers is other caregivers!
- **Teaching coping skills.** The information and advice the group provides can assist in problem solving many challenging situations you may be experiencing.
- **Sharing common concerns and joys.** Others in similar situations can offer encouragement and support.
- **Identifying and expressing stressful feelings in a safe place.** Sharing with people who will understand and offer emotional support which can improve your mood and decrease feelings of distress.
- **Providing affirmation and advocacy.** The group serves as a source of validation and can offer avenues to local resources.

Attending support group meetings can help you feel less alone, give you new strategies to cope with day-to-day stressors and help you feel affirmed in your work as a caregiver. The result will be a healthier, happier you which, in turn, means better care for your loved one. By taking time to care for your physical and emotional needs, you will discover you can feel more joy and contentment in your caregiving role.

Currently there are dozens of support groups meeting virtually—by phone or video conference. You can find a list of them by visiting <http://wisconsin caregiver.org/virtual-events-for-caregivers>. (For a list of caregiver support groups meeting in Dane County [click here](#).)

If you have never attended a support group, consider giving it a try. You might find it is just the thing you needed to help you through another day or week of caregiving.

—Jane Mahoney
Older American's Act Consultant
Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources

Creative Respite - Art Therapy for A Care Partner

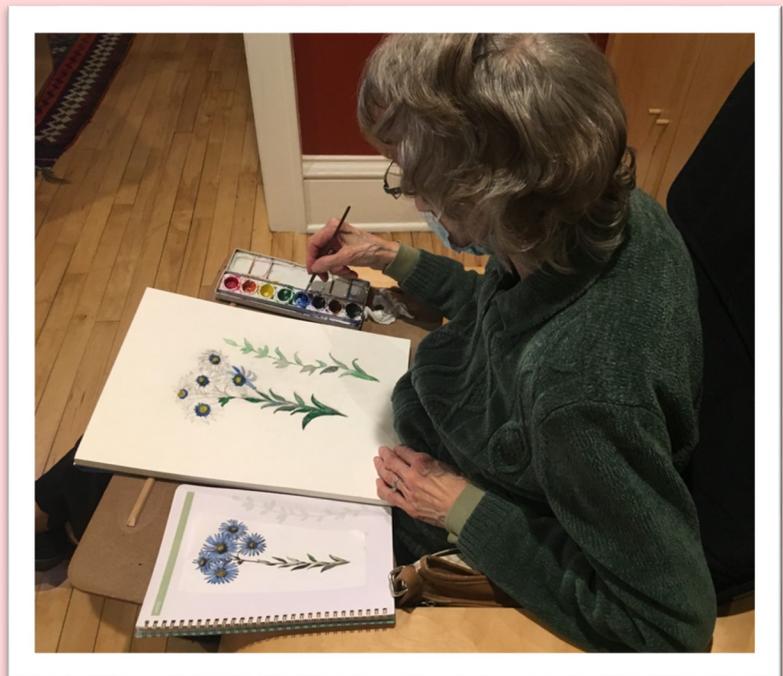


Marjorie Kaye receives virtual art instruction via her smart phone.

There are times, particularly for caregivers providing care to a person with dementia, when the most difficult stressor is finding ways to occupy, comfort, engage, and calm their loved one. In the best situations, the positive effects are long-lasting, extending beyond the direct experience of the care and providing an improvement in the quality of life for both the caregiver and their care partner.

In Summer 2020, the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was being felt

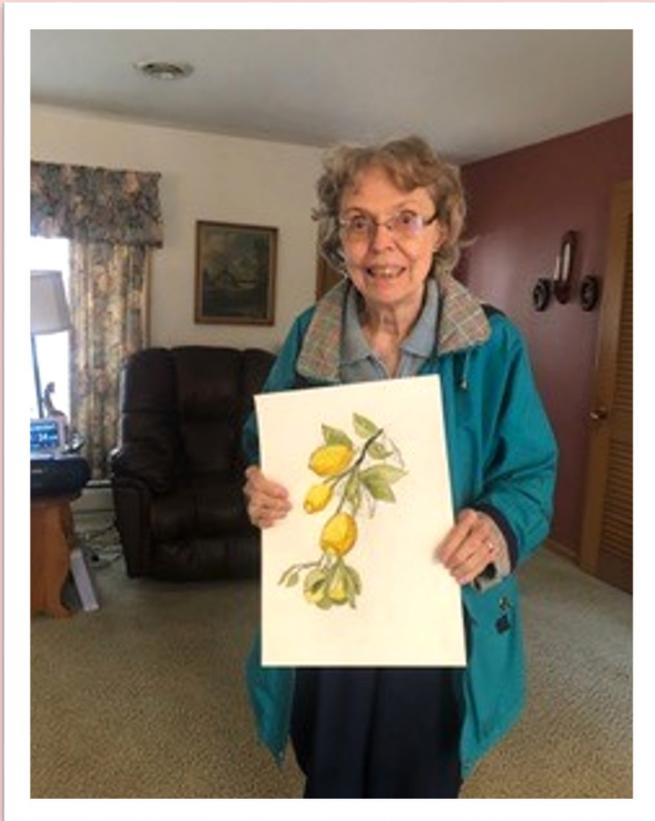
(continued on page 5)



When caregivers apply for Dane County Caregiver Program *Caring for Caregivers* grants we begin with an assessment that helps the caregiver consider what will provide them with the most support. For many caregivers, respite is the greatest need.

There are many ways to provide a break for caregivers, from adult day care, to in-home help for personal cares or home chores, to meal preparation assistance, or transportation to appointments, all of which allow the caregiver more free time to themselves. For other caregivers, respite comes in the form of transforming the life experience of their care partner.





Marjorie with another of her beautiful art pieces.

Although the initial funding for Caring for Caregivers Grants was quickly distributed and waiting lists were put on hold in March, the Dane County Caregiver Program is now expecting additional funding related to COVID-19 from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. We are not certain of the date for additional funding to arrive but we are currently adding to the waiting list for funding in 2021.

If you are interested in music or art therapy, or other respite or supplementary services to support your caregiving, contact me at 608-261-5679 or debroux.jane@countyofdane.com.

(continued from page 4)

in painful isolation for our most vulnerable older adults. In an effort to help caregivers provide connection and benefit for care partners in Dane County, the Caregiver Program began a separate Music Therapy Program funded by the CARES Act and delivered virtually to care partners. At a time when many caregivers felt uncomfortable with service providers coming into their homes, Music Therapy provided social connection along with the other benefits of engaging in an art form that allowed for personal expression and often provided a deep connection to memories and uplifting experiences.

During her assessment for a 2021 Caring for Caregiver Grant, Lindy Anderson expressed the desire to use grant funding to provide art instruction for her mom, Marjorie Kaye. Initially, Marjorie received virtual lessons from her instructor, Holli Hebl. Now that vaccinations have opened opportunities for safer interaction between vaccinated care recipients and providers, Marjorie also enjoys in-person instruction as well. The results of the artistic projects are beautiful with positive results for all. Marjorie loves making the art, and Lindy's positive result is in knowing her mother has such a rewarding connection, outlet, and means of expression.

*—Jane De Broux, Caregiver Specialist
Dane County Caregiver Program*



COVID-19 VACCINE FOR THE HOMEBOUND



Are you a **homebound**
Dane County resident
and want to get the
COVID-19 Vaccine?

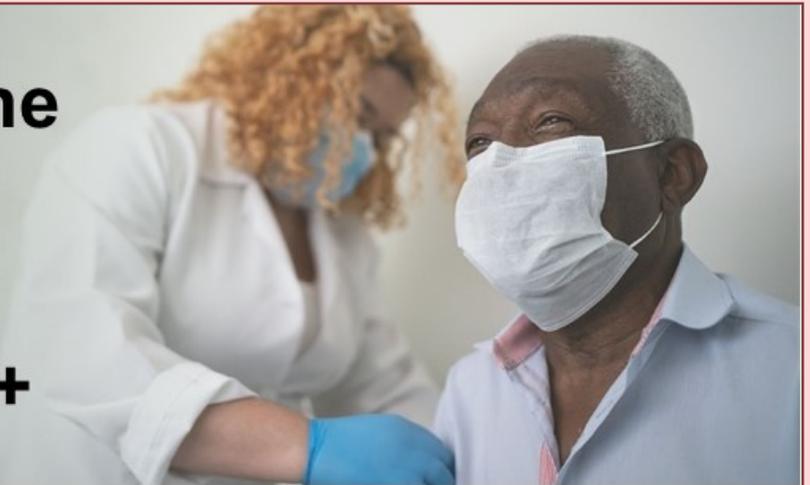


We can help you get
vaccinated!

Call (608) 240-7400
for more information.



COVID-19 Vaccine Transportation for Dane County Older Adults, 50+



Are you homebound or exhausted all options available to you and still need a ride to your COVID-19 vaccine appointment?

NO COST FOR DANE COUNTY RESIDENTS.



***Funded by Dane County
Department of Human Services.
Coordinated by NewBridge.***

(608) 512-0000 Ext. 3 - *English*
(608) 512-0000 Ext. 2 - *Spanish*
**(608) 695-2773 - *Tham lus Hmoob, Nplog, Qhab
Mim (Khmer), Tibetan, Nepali***

PRESENTATION

CAREGIVING DURING COVID-19: A SERIES OF EMOTIONS

Special guest speaker

Dr. Elliot Montgomery Sklar

Lucy Barylack, MSW



Whether caregiving for a loved one or trying to care for ourselves during the pandemic – we are all experiencing a series of common emotions. When we don't address these emotions, they can impact upon our physical and mental health. This series will provide a forum to discuss these feelings and experiences around COVID-19, along with practical tips and answers to your questions.

Wednesday, April 7th	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	How to Cope with Fear <i>We are still living in a time of unknowns - new COVID vaccines and new variants. This session will address coping with ongoing fear and anxiety.</i>
Wednesday, April 14th	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	How to Deal with Anger <i>Many of us are feeling frustrated, overwhelmed and angry. Interpersonal conflict has increased since the pandemic began, and this session will address ways to deal with anger and conflict.</i>
Wednesday, April 21st	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	How to Handle Uncertainty <i>It's hard to know what science to believe, and to have a sense of when the pandemic will be over. This session will address how to cope with the uncertainty we are all feeling.</i>
Wednesday, April 28th	11:00 am Eastern 10:00 am Central 9:00 am Mountain 8:00 am Pacific	How to Process Sadness <i>There is a loss that we feel over missed time, and missed loved ones. This session will discuss acknowledging the elements of grief we are all experiencing.</i>

Living Well with Dementia

Spring 2021 Community Virtual Resource

Cooperative Event of Dementia Friendly Middleton and Dementia Friendly West Madison

SAVE THE DATES

April 27th – April 29th

Virtual Resource Fair – Will be hosted on Zoom

TIME: 1PM-6PM Daily

Live Presentations with Q & A

Addressing all aspects of the dementia journey including:

- 🌱 Health and Wellness
- 🌱 Care Transitions
- 🌱 Research
- 🌱 Financial Issues
- 🌱 Activities to Do at Home
- 🌱 Crisis Prevention



@2020dementiafriendlyresourcefair

Drawings Daily for Gift Baskets!

Please **RSVP** to be entered.

RSVP to Amber – abormann@brookdale.com

Monthly MIPPA Moment: April is Irritable Bowel Syndrome Awareness Month

MIPPA (Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act) has a goal of educating older adults on Medicare's cost-saving benefits & preventive services.

For information on MIPPA Programs call MIPPA Program Specialist Leilani Amundson at 608-240-7458.

In the United States, there are between 25 and 45 million people who have irritable bowel syndrome (or IBS, *not* to be confused with Irritable Bowel Disease or IBD) according to the International Foundation for Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders. IBS is a chronic condition affecting the large intestine that causes cramping, abdominal pain, constipation, and gastrointestinal distress. Since 1997, April has been designated nationally as IBS awareness month.

Medicare generally covers all *medically necessary* tests ordered by your doctor to diagnose IBS, including a physical examination, diagnostic imaging studies such as colonoscopy or CT scan, and laboratory tests such as a stool test or lactose intolerance testing. If you aren't at high risk for colorectal cancer, Medicare covers a colonoscopy once every 120 months, or 48 months after a previous flexible sigmoidoscopy. If you have Part B, Medicare generally pays 80% of allowable charges once you meet your Part B deductible. If you have Medicare Advantage, you may also have a copayment for these tests.

For more MIPPA Program information, call MIPPA Program Specialist, Leilani Amundson, at 608-240-7458.

Participants Needed for Dementia Caregiving Study

Researchers from the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison recently received funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in collaboration with a small business, CareVirtue, to research whether their web and mobile app for dementia care partners is useful, and if they can create an intelligent caregiver assistant that would potentially make the app more useful for caregivers. They are currently looking for people to participate in this study.

The purpose of the study is to determine whether a web and mobile app to support caregiving for a person with dementia is useful and acceptable for caregivers—and whether they can create an intelligent caregiver assistant that would potentially make the app more useful for caregivers. The study is directed by Dr. Nicole Werner in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

If you agree to participate, you will be compensated \$150 and will be able to use the app without cost for one year. Learn more about eligibility and how to sign up by clicking the link below:

<https://www.alzwisc.org/event/caregiving-study/>



FREE Virtual (Online) Welcome to Medicare Seminars

**Sponsored by Area Agency on Aging of Dane County's
Elder Benefits Specialist Program**

What you need to know about enrolling in Medicare

If you are turning age 64 this year, we can help you make informed choices about your Medicare options! You'll receive accurate and detailed information from unbiased experts in benefit programs.

May 15, 2021, 9-11:30 am

Email aaa@countyofdane.com to register by 5/6/21

July 17, 2021, 9-11:30 am

Email aaa@countyofdane.com to register by 7/8/21

September 18, 2021, 9-11:30 am

Email aaa@countyofdane.com to register by 9/9/21

Seminars will be offered via Zoom.

Email for more information.



**Connecting People with the
Assistance They Need**

Monday through Friday
Call 7:45 am—4:30 pm

(608) 240-7400

Website:

Email: ADRC@countyofdane.com

Click on the button to follow the ADRC on
facebook.



Save the Dates:
Mon., May 10 & Wed., May 12, 2021

Aging Advocacy Online Events



Schedule:

May 10, 1-3:00 p.m.
Issue Training &
Skill Building

May 12, 1-2:00 p.m.
Meetings with your
state legislators

For more information:
gwaar.org/aging-advocacy-online-2021

#WIAgingAdvocacyOnline



Your voice can make a difference!

Are you interested in issues affecting older adults? Join members of the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) and others to help educate state legislators about priority issues impacting Wisconsin's aging population via this year's virtual events!

No experience is necessary. You'll get the training and support you need to hold effective meetings with state lawmakers in a two-hour statewide online training Monday, May 10. Then put your training to use as a local host leads you and other local constituents in short virtual meetings with your state legislators on Wednesday, May 12. Your group will present WAAN's 2021 priorities and share related personal stories. Your experiences are important and help policymakers understand how specific policy issues and proposals impact older constituents.

Register at: <https://gwaar.wufoo.com/forms/z1xa9cf904ub7by/> (closes 4/26/21)

Aging Advocacy Online 2021 activities focus on connecting aging advocates with their legislators to advocate for this year's WAAN key focus issues*:

- **Aging and Disability Resource Center Reinvestment** – includes funding to support the **Elder Benefit Specialist** program and to expand **Dementia Care Specialist** services, **caregiver** support and programs, and **health promotion** services
- **Family Caregiver Support** – includes **caregiver** tax credit, Family and **Medical Leave** Act amendments, and expansion of the **Alzheimer's** Family and Caregiver Support Program
- **Infrastructure Expansion** – includes **transportation** support, high-speed **internet** access, and **housing** affordability
- **Lowering Health Care Cost** – includes **falls** reduction funding and **prescription drug** cost affordability

**Key focus issues are subject to change*