

# Thank you, family caregivers – but take care of yourselves, too

Nicolette Castagna, My View 1:02 p.m. EST November 26, 2016



The word “caregiver” probably brings to mind someone in your family. Someone who provides informal or unpaid care to a relative or friend with a chronic condition such as diabetes, heart disease or dementia. Someone whose assistance with everyday tasks makes an enormous difference.

Here in National Family Caregivers Month, we’re encouraged to recognize those often unsung family caregivers for their dedication and service. They’re far more numerous than many of us realize.

The latest national count totaled approximately 40 million family caregivers. That translates into approximately 37 billion hours of care. With that care, caregivers make a positive and significant impact not only on their families but also on their communities, and even on the health and social-service systems nationwide.

Caring for a loved one unquestionably comes with great benefits. Yet it can come with equally great emotional, physical and financial costs. A large majority of caregivers face high levels of stress resulting in a higher incidence of depression, compromised immune function and social isolation. In addition, caregivers often neglect their own health and self-care needs because of their dedicated attention to the person receiving care.

So caregivers need resources that can provide support and teach coping skills and self-care behaviors. The good news is that such resources are available, free of charge, to caregivers here in Tallahassee and throughout North and Central Florida.

A six-week program called Powerful Tools for Caregivers teaches them how to reduce their own stress, communicate more effectively, set goals and make tough caregiving decisions. Through the North and Central Florida Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Partnership, community organizations such as the Alzheimer’s Project of Tallahassee and Westminster Communities of Florida have been able to provide Powerful Tools for Caregivers to family caregivers at no cost.

The program is open to all family caregivers who take care of a loved one with a chronic condition. Workshops meet for 90 minutes once a week for six weeks.

To learn more about Powerful Tools for Caregivers, call or email LaVon Edgerton, FSU College of Medicine Department of Geriatrics, at 850-644-5619 or [geriatrics.research@med.fsu.edu](mailto:geriatrics.research@med.fsu.edu).

The delivery of, and research behind, this program is funded through the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration and the Florida Department of Health. The FSU College of Medicine is one of 44 organizations in 29 states to receive the competitive grant supporting these caregiver workshops.

Please help spread the word to the caregivers in your life.

*Nicolette Castagna, MPH, is the North and Central Florida Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Partnership coordinator. She works out of the Department of Geriatrics at the Florida State University College of Medicine. Her email address is [nicolette.castagna@med.fsu.edu](mailto:nicolette.castagna@med.fsu.edu).*

Read or Share this story: <http://on.tdo.com/2g3HarD>