

The Beacon

Spring/Summer 2015



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Greetings from Angus Campbell, Executive Director

Spring has finally arrived and it brings our latest edition of The Beacon. I hope you enjoy everyone's individual contribution. There seems to be an unplanned theme of communication – always an important topic when giving care.

The weather has been challenging this past winter, but with our technology CNS remained opened with staff working from home.

May is Caregiver Awareness Month in Nova Scotia and we will be holding Caregiver Appreciation Teas throughout the province. Please see our invitation on the back cover. It's a wonderful time for all of us to get together and acknowledge the contribution that family and friend caregivers make to our society.

We also invite you to join us at our Annual General Meeting in June. Our Board has been working hard this year and will present new By-Laws for adoption by the membership. Copies of the By-Laws and our 2015-2020 Strategic Plan are available from our office or on our website.

Caregivers Nova Scotia Board of Directors



Back row, from left to right: Mike Sangster, James McRae (Treasurer), Ruth deMolitor, Angus Campbell (Executive Director), Jean Willison (Secretary), Larry Baxter, Bill Tait. Front Row: Mary MacLellan (President), Anne Corbin, Kathleen Rothwell (Vice President). Missing from photo: Mary Burey, Dr. Marie-Claude Grégoire, Lynn Lowe, Dr. Uzma Naeem, Dr. Heather Robertson.



Thank you to the Department of Health & Wellness – Continuing Care Branch for their ongoing support

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Caring Conversations with Loved Ones

By Maggie Roach-Ganaway, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Cape Breton Region

It is important that as a caregiver you are informed and ready to deal with life as it happens, whether it is good or bad. Here are seven things that you may want to discuss with your loved one so there are fewer surprises.

How are they doing now? Is the person you care for already facing challenges or health problems that you may not be aware of? Do you have a clear and realistic view of their daily life? Are there things that can be done to make their life easier?

Crisis Planning. We all need a plan no matter what our age. If there is a crisis, how will your care recipient get help? Do you have contact information for relatives, neighbours, friends, doctors, lawyers, and local service providers? Consider creating a telephone list in case you need to make calls on their behalf.

Advance Care Planning. Everyone should have an up-to-date Will, an Enduring Power of Attorney (for financial issues), and a Personal Directive (for end of life care). Be sure that both you and your loved one have these documents and that you know where they are located.

What options are available? Most people would prefer to stay in their own home, but that may not always be possible. Could the house be made more accessible to allow them to stay, like a first floor bedroom/bathroom, or ramps, etc.? If they can't stay in their own home, where could they go? What matters most to them? The answers may surprise you.

What costs will be involved? Everyone should be aware of the cost associated with care, whether it is home care or in a long-term care (LTC) or assisted living facility. You may want to discuss LTC insurance and family retirement planning and protection.

The Healthcare System. It may be good to emphasize to your loved one the importance of having just one doctor to oversee their care.

Get to know their physician and stay in touch with them. Know what health insurance policies are in place and how to access them.

End of Life. It's a hard fact of life that many people end up confused and afraid because family members weren't prepared to make the tough choices. The best way to avoid this is to have an in-depth family discussion in advance. Talk about their fears, hopes and how they want decisions handled. Then prepare yourself to follow those wishes.

These conversations can go in all sorts of directions, but it is important to have them in the first place to make life a little easier for both of you. Caregivers Nova Scotia can help you with these conversations. We have many resources available as well as the ability to talk with you in advance so you will know how to approach them. We are here to help!



211 is a Nova Scotia based non-profit that offers navigation services for anyone

looking for help in the area of human, social or community services. Trained navigators are on duty 24/7/365 to help people get information about and find services offered by government and the not-for-profit sector, including home care, income support, counselling and much more. 211 has information on more than 5,000 services and programs across Nova Scotia. Whether a need arises from a caregiver or a person receiving care, the thoughtful, empathetic team at 211 is always there to help. Accessible by phone (2-1-1), email (help@ns.211.ca), or for those preferring self-service, there is a searchable website (www.ns.211.ca).

Nova Scotia Libraries

By Carlye Stein, Research and
Operations Coordinator

"A library is a good place to go when you feel unhappy, for there, in a book, you may find encouragement and comfort. A library is a good place to go when you feel bewildered or undecided, for there, in a book, you may have your question answered." E.B. White.

These days, of course, you can have your question answered on Google or Wikipedia in seconds, at home or from the convenience of your mobile device. Still, no search engine, no matter how fast, comprehensive, or clever, quite takes the place of wandering through a library's stacks of books or of its amazing human search engines: librarians.

Caregivers Nova Scotia (CNS) has worked with libraries on a number of occasions to hold workshops and presentations. We also hold our monthly caregiver support groups at some of the local branches.

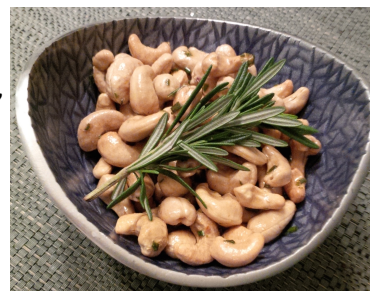
This year, we are very excited to be partnering with the libraries to promote Caregiver Awareness Month in May. Staff at the regional library headquarters and the branches have been extremely supportive of our efforts, and they are helping us to set up displays at 32 branches across the province. As well, our Support Coordinators have teamed up with a few local branches to hold our Caregiver Appreciation Teas. If you are on social media, you may see information about our displays or Appreciation Teas on the libraries' Facebook and Twitter pages.

And libraries offer much more than books! There is programming for babies, seniors, and everyone in between. You can attend guest lectures on diverse topics, poetry readings, knitting groups, even a class on how to use your new tablet (for adults of course!). The list goes on and on. Much of this programming is free of charge, and many libraries offer their meeting spaces to non-profits at no cost.

Nova Scotia's libraries offer so much to their communities, both on site and online. CNS is very pleased, and very grateful, to have their help and support during Caregiver Awareness Month.

Carlye's Warm Cashew Snack

This is a delicious, simple to prepare, and nutritious snack. Native to Brazil, cashews are the kidney-shaped seeds



that are attached to the bottom of the cashew apple. They are an excellent source of plant protein and of a number of essential nutritional ingredients: a 1/4-cup of cashews will supply 98% of copper and 21% of daily zinc requirements. Like other nuts, cashews are low in cholesterol and saturated fat.

By adjusting the amounts, you can make smaller portions of this tasty snack if you like. It's also good made with a combination of walnuts or pecans and almonds.

4 cups unsalted cashews
1 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
2 tbsp fresh rosemary leaves, finely chopped
2 tsp brown sugar
¼ tsp cayenne pepper (or more to taste)
1 tsp sea or Kosher salt

Method

1. Preheat oven to 350°.
2. Spread cashews on a baking sheet and toast until warm, 5-10 minutes. Remove from baking sheet and set aside.
3. While cashews are in the oven, melt the butter.
4. Stir in remaining ingredients.
5. Combine cashews and the butter mixture.
6. Serve warm; reheat if prepared ahead.

Tips for Improving Communication with Healthcare Providers

By Brenda Sangster, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Capital District

As caregivers, our time is precious. This is also true of our healthcare providers. Here are some tips to help with better communication between caregivers and doctors.

1. Educate yourself about your loved one's or friend's disease or disability.
2. Keep a journal of your concerns. Make note of any changes, whether it be of medications or behavioural issues.
3. Be clear about what you want to say.
4. Write questions down so you won't forget them. If you can present your questions in an organized way, it will help the doctor to understand your concerns and provide help more quickly and effectively.
5. Talk to your doctor about your own health.
6. Learn the routine at your doctor's office so you can make the system work for you, not against you.
7. If you have lots of things to talk about, make a **double** appointment, so the doctor can

allow enough time to meet with you and you won't feel rushed.

8. You can also write a letter before your meeting outlining your concerns. This can be faxed or mailed. It will give your doctor a chance to prepare for your meeting.
9. Recognize that your healthcare provider/doctor may not be able to answer all of your questions, especially those beginning with "why".
10. Acknowledge the role the doctor is playing and work together. Don't forget to thank the doctor for all he or she is doing. A little appreciation goes a long way.

Following these tips may lead to positive outcomes such as better care for the care recipient, less stress and illness for the caregiver, more efficient use of the doctor's time, reduced costs for the health care system, and more satisfaction for all concerned.

Adapted from "Improving Doctor/Caregiver Communication", National Family Caregiver Association

Notice of Caregivers Nova Scotia Association's

Annual General Meeting

to be held on Saturday, June 20th from 11:00am to 12:30pm
at the Public Archives, Akins Room,
6016 University Avenue, Halifax

Everyone is welcome.

There will be a Special Resolution amending our Bylaws.
Copies of proposed Bylaws are available
on our website or by contacting our office.

This is a scent-free building.

Please RSVP before June 18th by contacting the Halifax office.

Caregiver TeleGroup Support

By Lynn Butler, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Capital District

Caregivers Nova Scotia and the Dalhousie School of Occupational Therapy recently completed Phase 1 of a project aimed at providing support to family and friend caregivers who are unable to attend in-person support group meetings. The project was called Caregiver TeleGroup Support or CTGS for short. Small groups of approximately six caregivers who agreed to attend regularly scheduled telephone support group meetings were set up. Essentially, we copied our in-person support group meetings with the exception that as participants we were not able to see one another and communicated instead by telephone. Phase 1 of the project looked at whether or not telephone support could be an effective way to deliver support to caregivers and whether or not this type of support would decrease caregiver stress.

We know that caregivers who attend in-person support group meetings benefit from coming together and sharing their joys, sorrows, concerns and the challenges and stresses that are associated with caregiving. The question was: would the same benefits be found for telephone support group meetings?

The short answer is yes. Caregivers who participated in CTGS reported that the meetings held by phone were enthusiastic and described their interactions as very beneficial; for most of them, it was the highlight of their week. Many of the caregivers arranged their day around participating in the calls, and they felt a real bond with the other caregivers on the calls.

As one of the support coordinators involved in facilitating the telephone support, I have to say it was a terrific experience. My initial concerns that it might be difficult to handle six people talking at the same time, or that the caregivers would not feel that the experience was of

benefit, were quickly eliminated. For the most part, all the caregivers were eager to make sure everyone was able to participate in each call, and they shared their support for one another easily and with genuine concern. In fact, it was the caregivers themselves who asked me to make sure they were not taking up too much time on any given call, as they wanted to be sure everyone had equal time to share. In between calls, the caregivers also expressed concern for one another's situations and wanted to know if there would be ways to ensure the other caregivers were doing okay.

As a facilitator, it was an honour and privilege to be part of this rewarding experience. Once again, the true heart of the unpaid caregiver shone through. Their ability to put others first and to be concerned for the situations of others astounds me, and it happens time and time again. There is still more to research before we can begin offering this service on a regular basis, but we have applied for funding. The prospect of being able to offer telephone support to more Nova Scotian caregivers who are isolated and need support is exciting indeed.



If you would like to receive a colour copy of our newsletter by email, please subscribe by going to our website at www.CaregiversNS.org and sign up at the bottom of any page.



The Stages of Caregiving: Stage 3 – Life in Transition

By Jennifer Briand, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Western Region

Living in the moment takes on new meaning for a caregiver who begins to recognize the approaching end of life of the person for whom they are caring. Until now the focus has been on physical care challenges, on practical difficulties of daily living, and concerns about the future. But now, as changes in how the meaning of life and relationships are understood, a caregiver can be profoundly affected by changing roles and responsibilities. As those concerns borne for so long are faced, time needs to be taken to celebrate a shared journey and to acknowledge the grief that has been carried throughout the caregiving journey.

I have often heard caregivers at this stage being described as the 'rock' of the family. Others, however, may be confused, feeling the caregiver is lacking emotion; what they may fail to realize is that the caregiver *has* been experiencing grief, which is more than a display of sadness. Grief is an individual process that depends on previous experiences and supports during every stage in life. The caregiver often faces many losses throughout their journey while they are caring for their loved one, watching their person lose abilities, security, hope, identity, and dreams. The caregiver often experiences anticipatory grief as they realize that death is the final outcome of their caregiving journey. And quite often they experience the regular symptoms of grief early on, which in turn, prepares them for future losses. Their 'rock' ability can allow them to experience later grief with less intensity as a result of experience with multiple losses. According to R.W. Emerson, "everything teaches transition, transference, metamorphosis; therein is human power...".

As you enter this stage of transition, here are a few suggestions from me and other caregivers.

Celebrate the moment: This is the time to be in the moment with your loved one. Spend that extra time caring, talking, reminiscing, and just 'being' with each other. During this time give yourself permission to let go of other tasks and responsibilities.

Communicate: Communicating our hopes, fears, wishes, and questions is an important part of the human experience during this time of transition. Practice and have conversations with your friends and family. Let go of the temptation to keep your feelings to yourself. Revelation can be cathartic and allows others to realize that you are experiencing feelings of loss and grief. They will also realize that you could use some extra help. Encourage your loved one to express their feelings as well. If they



want to talk about their fears about the future and impending death, have those conversations. These discussions will bring you closer together, and can help later on with the grieving process.

Care for yourself: Always remember to balance your own health needs while caring for someone else. Eat healthy, and look after your physical and mental health. Connect with others during this time; seek out support groups if possible. Practicing methods of meditation, creativity, or self-reflection can help you become aware of emotions that you may have suppressed during your caregiving journey.

Accept and allow: There is no step-by-step method of how to experience this transition or to grieve. Although there are some similar experiences had by all, we are all individuals

The Stages of Caregiving: Stage 3 – Life in Transition (continued)

By Jennifer Briand, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Western Region

and how we experience loss depends on our own range of reactions, thoughts, and feelings during this journey. Feeling relieved is normal after a stressful and overwhelming time in your life. Accept that you will have moments of sadness. Allow yourself and your loved one to experience both sadness and laughter. These emotions will help you adjust while losing a meaningful part of your life.

Continue to plan: Spend time with your loved one discussing their plans and wishes. Plan for

extra services and time with your Palliative Care Team. Palliative care can provide an amazing amount of support and comfort that will provide you with strength, and the ability to move forward during this transition.

With time, you will find your way and gradually you will be able to reflect back on your caregiving experience with a sense of pride, love, and comfort. And as you walk with the memories of your loved one, you will be able to celebrate their life.

The Individual's Right to Live "At Risk"

By Cindie Smith, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Northern & Eastern Mainland Region

Many caregivers have told me they have great frustration in their inability to make their loved one do something that is in their best interest. "Can you make my mother take her medication?" "He has COPD and is STILL smoking!" "No matter how many times I ask, they still won't allow Home Care to help." In most cases, the caregiver only wants what is best for their loved one and can see that if the current situation continues, there will be poor outcomes. There is a delicate balance to be struck in urging the care recipient to make choices that are safe and healthy, while recognizing their right as an individual to live at risk.

Any caregiver who has used heavy-handed tactics knows that it is not only ineffective, but can be counter-productive. If a loved one feels bullied with the threat of "going to a home" the caregiver can likely expect even less cooperation than before. A more useful strategy may be more diplomatic. It may even be helpful to script a conversation and use a formula that will help guide the discussion, for example:

1. **Affirm their rights as an individual** – "Mom, you've been keeping a house far longer than I, and I understand that this is your home and not mine. You have so many more responsibilities now that you are taking care of Dad's needs too and I am concerned."
2. **Explain how their decision affects you** – "I hear the exhaustion in your voice and wish I could be there to help. I've also noticed that you are not getting out to see your friends or going to church anymore. I don't know anyone who could keep up this pace indefinitely and I'm worried about your health so much that I am having trouble sleeping."
3. **Look at all the options** – "Would you consider talking to the people at Home Care about their services or maybe a private provider? Are there other services you can think of?"
4. **Negotiate** – "I understand that I have no right to tell you what to do so all I am asking is that you try it. If having strangers in the house makes you uncomfortable, maybe we can find some other solution that will work. Would you agree to talking about what services are available?"

There are no guarantees that every care recipient will be open to change. However, acknowledging the rights of the competent individual is a good place to start.



Caregiver Appreciation Teas

May is Caregiver Awareness Month

Please join us in celebrating family members and friends who give unpaid care to loved ones at one of the 11 Caregiver Appreciation Teas we will be hosting across the province. Everyone is welcome and there is no admission charge.

Western Region

- Yarmouth** Friday, May 22nd, 11:00am-1:00pm, I.W. Killam Memorial Library, 405 Main St.
Bridgewater Thursday, May 14th, 1:30-3:30pm, M. Hennigar Public Library, 135 North Park St.
Middleton Wednesday, May 27th, 1:00-3:00pm, Rosa M. Harvey Library, 45 Gates Ave.
For more info contact Jennifer Briand at 902.521.5592 or Western@CaregiversNS.org

Capital District

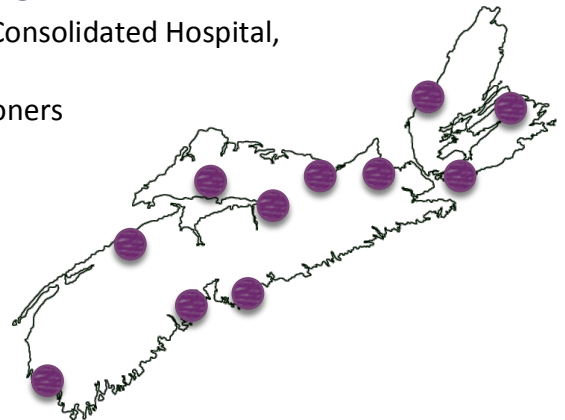
- Halifax** Thursday, May 14th, 1:00-3:00pm, The Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts, Lillian Piercey Concert Hall, 6199 Chebucto Rd.
For more info or to RSVP, contact 902.421.7390 by Thursday, May 7th.

Northern & Eastern Mainland Region

- Truro** Thursday, May 21st, 1:30-3:30pm, Colchester East Hants Public Library, Community Room, 754 Prince St.
Springhill Wednesday, May 13th, 2:00-4:00pm, Dr. Carson & Marian Murray Centre, Hospitality Room, 6 Main St.
Stellarton Thursday, May 14th, 2:00-4:00pm, Pharmacy First Community Room, 266 Foord St.
Antigonish Wednesday, May 20th, 2:00-4:00pm, People's Place Library, 283 Main St.
For more info contact Cindie Smith at 902.324.2273 or Northern@CaregiversNS.org

Cape Breton Region

- Inverness** Thursday, May 28th, 1:00-3:00pm, Inverness Consolidated Hospital, Community Health Centre, 39 James St.
Sydney Friday, May 22nd, 1:00-3:00pm, Sydney Pensioners Club, 30 Inglis St.
Arichat Friday, May 15th, 2:00-4:00pm, New Horizons Seniors Centre, 2373 Highway #206
For more info contact Maggie Roach-Ganaway at 902.371.3883 or CapeBreton@CaregiversNS.org.



We look forward to seeing you!