

The Beacon

Spring/Summer 2016



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May is Caregiver Awareness Month!

Caregivers Nova Scotia is reaching out across the province, promoting support and education for caregivers, and increasing awareness amongst Nova Scotians. Due to budget constraints this year, we are not able to hold Caregiver Appreciation Teas, however we will make every Support Group in May a special one.

We invite you to join our social media campaign using the hashtag #caregiverawareness2016 on Facebook and Twitter. Our daily posts will include interesting facts and figures about family and friend caregivers, information about events taking place throughout the month, how we help caregivers, and more.

Remember, if you're on social media talking about caregivers and you want to highlight some of the work we or other community organizations do to support them, why not give us a mention? In your post, just include our Twitter handle @CaregiversNS.

We will be holding educational workshops throughout the province including *Advance Care Planning for Caregivers*, *Safe Medicines for Seniors & Caregivers*, and *Brushing Up on Mouth Care*.

It's been another busy year at Caregivers Nova Scotia. I invite you to attend our Annual General Meeting to meet our Board and Staff, and to learn more about our organization's successes.

Our Annual General Meeting

will be held on

Saturday, June 4th 11am

at the Public Archives of NS

6016 University Ave, Halifax

Please RSVP to our toll-free # below.

Sincerely,
Angus Campbell
Executive Director



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


Caregivers
Nova Scotia

for friends and family giving care

3433 Dutch Village Road, Halifax, NS B3N 2S7
Tel. 902.421.7390 | Toll-free 1.877.488.7390
Info@CaregiversNS.org www.CaregiversNS.org

Caregiver Tele-Connect: A Special Program for a Special Population

By Carlye Stein, Research & Operations Coordinator

Caregivers Nova Scotia has recently launched Caregiver Tele-Connect (CTC), an initiative supporting family and friend caregivers who are, or expect to be, giving care at home to a loved one who is dying. This program, based on the successful Caregiver Telegroup Support program piloted in 2014-2015, aims to provide short-term peer support and skill building for caregivers using telephone conferencing.

CTC is different from Caregiver Telegroup Support in that it was created with a special population in mind: **those who are, or expect to be, looking after someone at home who is dying.** In addition to emotional support and the 'magic' that can happen in support group meetings, participants will be sent a Welcome Kit with four print resources. These include practical information on planning for a death at home and what changes to expect near the end of life, details about the EHS Special Patient Program and how to register for it, and what you need to do when someone passes away.

Our goal is that, through peer support and the resources described above, CTC will help caregivers feel better prepared for the death of their loved one, increase their confidence, and reduce caregiver stress. Please see the slide show on our website for more information.

At Caregivers Nova Scotia we are here to support all caregivers, regardless of where they are in their journey. Whether a caregiver is unable to participate in CTC or is a participant who has completed the 8-week program, we will continue to support them in every way we can.

Interested caregivers can call us directly, and we also encourage healthcare professionals and community partners to refer people they feel could benefit. We are currently recruiting, but space is limited to 15 groups of 5 participants each.

For more information, please visit our website at www.CaregiversNS.org/how-we-help/ctc or contact us: 1.877.488.7390 or Info@CaregiversNS.org. Please see the CTC poster on page 8.

Cindie's Roasted Tomato Pasta Sauce

If you are looking for a new pasta sauce recipe, try this one. It is easy to prepare and very flavourful.

12 large fresh tomatoes, cut in eighths
1 large onion, chopped
4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
8 thin slices of pancetta, cut into pieces
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
2 cups grated parmesan cheese
Freshly chopped basil for garnish



Layer the first four ingredients in a 13"x 9" shallow baking pan. Drizzle olive oil over top. Cover with foil and bake at 375° for about 1 hour. Remove foil and sprinkle parmesan over top. Return to the oven for another 8 minutes. Let rest for 10 minutes, spoon over cooked pasta. Top with basil.

There is a New Superhero in Town

By Jennifer Briand, Support Coordinator, Western Region

Popular culture ensures that we are very much aware of superheroes. They surround us on a daily basis. We are all familiar with such figures from our past as Superman, Spiderman, Supergirl, Wonder Woman, Batman, and The Flash. As a result of amazing recent movies and video games, of literature and products, these superheroes are once more everywhere. Thanks to recurring episodes of the hit television show *Big Bang Theory*, it is no secret in our family that our beloved Grammy is an avid fan of Sheldon Cooper and his favourite superhero The Flash, with all his 'speedster abilities'. And it is wonderful to hear multiple generations enjoying discussions around the dinner table about favourite superheroes. Oh, and I have recently heard through social media that The Flash is having new issues with 'The Zoom'.

Why have we created superheroes? Why are they important to us? There are endless opinions about the reasons for our enthusiasm for superheroes. At least one clinical psychotherapist, Dr. Robin S. Rosenberg, has made a study of the psychology of superheroes and their powers, publishing books that include *What's the Matter with Batman?* and *Superhero Origins*. After exploring some of these views about superheroes, I have discovered a few basic facts that have led me to the discovery of a new superhero!

Many superheroes develop as a result of an inner struggle over time. This mental tussle sometimes affects the superhero physically, enabling her or him to help someone else overcome great stress and despair.

The most common word used to define our superheroes and their powers is 'courage'. Superheroes use their courage to turn pain into power. They are there to help when someone's world is about to fall apart. No

wonder we need them to help us through life's stresses and strains. Tear away the masks and the capes, and there are superheroes who live among us every day. Our caregivers are true superheroes! They work day and night to make things right for their families and, with true courage, overcome many obstacles until they finally learn to 'fly'.

To celebrate our Superheroes, Caregivers Nova Scotia is collaborating with community partners to

hold a Courageous Caregiver Conference on May 12 in Bridgewater.

Advance registration is recommended.

The first Courageous Caregiver Conference was held in New Minas in November 2015. Due to its success, another is planned for the Valley on November 4, 2016. Stay tuned for more details!

Courageous Caregivers Conference
Join us for a day of self-care, learning and inspiration!



STAY AT HOME CARE | flourish: FAMILY WELL BEING SOCIETY | Northwood Caregivers Nova Scotia for friends and family giving care

May 19, 2016
10 – 4 (Doors open at 9am)
Bridgewater Fire Department
FREE Lunch is included – call 902 543 1727 to register

Sessions include the following information:

- *Navigating the System
- *Medication Management
- *Diet and Nutrition
- *Self-care
- *Legal Information
- *Safety Systems
- *Home Adaptations
- *Relaxation

Registration in advance to assure lunch for everyone and seating is limited – 902 543 1727 or email apfyf@ns.sympatico.ca

Advance Care Planning

By Lynn Butler, Support Coordinator, Capital District

The Nova Scotia Hospice Palliative Care Association describes advance care planning as “...a process of reflection and communication, a time for you to reflect on your values and wishes, to let others know your future health and personal care preferences in the event that you become incapable of consenting to or refusing treatment or other care.”

A March 2012 Ipsos-Reid poll found that 86% of Canadians have not heard of advance care planning and that less than half have had a discussion with a family member or friend about healthcare treatments if, due to an illness or accident, they were no longer able to communicate. Caregivers Nova Scotia has found that many of the family and friend caregivers we support have not prepared an advance care plan for themselves or their care recipient, or they do not know what it is or why it’s important. This can be a costly mistake that can lead to additional stress and, potentially, to unnecessary and unwanted medical interventions. When not prepared, many families are left struggling to make healthcare decisions during a crisis. Family members can be left with lingering guilt over the decisions they were forced to make.

One way to minimize this stress, guilt, and confusion is to create your own advance care plan and to ensure that one is in place for your care recipient. If you want to ensure that your wishes for care are heard and respected, it is important to have discussions with your family, friends, health care professionals, and your substitute decision maker—the person whom you choose to speak on your behalf if you cannot.

Remember that an advance care plan is much more than just a document. It is a process that starts with considering what is important to you with respect to what kind of future health and

personal care you want should you be unable to speak for yourself. It involves deciding whom you want to speak for you, communicating your wishes to family, friends, and health care providers, and then documenting them. Your wishes may change over time, so it is important to review your plan periodically.

Caregivers Nova Scotia has developed a workshop to take caregivers through the steps involved in creating an advance care plan. The workshop is delivered from the caregiver perspective and uses relevant and interactive activities to help make the process as easy as possible. Please contact us if you are interested in participating in our advance care planning workshop. It will help you start the conversation and start making your plan now, so that your wishes for future care will be respected.

Advance Care Planning for Caregivers

*Don't know what Advance Care Planning is?
Or why it is important?*

Come to our free workshop and
let us help you start the conversation
about your future healthcare wishes.

WHEN: Thursday, May 12th, 2016 – 2:00pm to 4:00pm
WHERE: Young Tower, 6080 Young St, Suite 105

Seating is limited.
Please register by calling 902.421.7390.


Caregivers
Nova Scotia
for friends and family giving care


Speak Up
Start the conversation
about end-of-life care

Playaway Audio Books

By Cindie Smith, Support Coordinator, Northern & Eastern Mainland

Audrey is a very sharp-minded 95-year old. She has had some health issues lately, but that hasn't dulled her interest in news and the world around her. One of her favourite hobbies is reading legal thrillers, and John Grisham is currently her preferred author. She loves a good story!

But Audrey's eyesight is failing, and she can no longer read comfortably for any length of time. This has impacted her quality of life and her ability to be independent. She does not want to rely on someone else reading to her. Her family had considered audio books, but the compact disc format was a bit confusing—inserting and ejecting the CD, then trying to find your place when resuming listening.

They were delighted to have found a new audio book format that has simplified her reading needs. It's called Playaway—a tiny device that is both the audio book and the playing device all in one. It measures about 3"x 2" and is very lightweight. The only things you will need to provide are a AAA battery and your own headphones or earbuds.

The small display screen tells you which chapter you are reading, how much time is remaining in the chapter, how far through the book you have progressed, and how much battery life is remaining. There is a volume button on the side and the speed with which the narrator speaks can be controlled as well.

Nova Scotia libraries have more than 1,150 titles available for loan in this format from Yarmouth to Sydney (except HRM), and inter-library loans are available if the title you want is at another location in the province. You can order a Playaway book through your library's website or go to your local library and a staff person will be happy to help you. The Playaway book will be delivered to your local



library branch and you can return it there as well. It should be noted that there are no Playaway format audio books in any of the 14 Halifax Public Libraries.

So whether you are like Audrey and your ability to see the written word has been compromised or if you want to read while doing housework, out for a walk, on a flight or on the treadmill, why not check out Playaway format audio books.

This is one more reason to love your local library and the good folks working there!

Toxic Emotions and Ways Caregivers Can Avoid Them

By Maggie Roach-Ganaway, Support Coordinator, Cape Breton

Caregivers can be susceptible to a range of emotions that can negatively affect their physical and mental health. It is important to find a way to deal with these emotions so that we can try to keep the effects to a minimum.

“Mom is in mid-stage dementia and it is no longer safe for her to cook her own meals. I stop at her house to make supper before racing home to tend my own kids. I can’t continue this way but Mom needs me more now that her vision is failing. I would never be able to forgive myself if something happened and I wasn’t there.”

Guilt is one of the negative emotions that caregivers experience most frequently. Often it is difficult to avoid. If left unchecked, guilt can wreak havoc on a caregiver’s mental state. This emotion is often felt when you set your expectations too high and you are unable to achieve them. Instead of trying to be Superman/woman all the time, try to set more realistic goals so that you are not beating yourself up if you are not able to “do it all”.

“Mom and Dad need a lot more support now that they are older so I travel across town every day to check on them. My brother lives across the street from our parents but he never offers to help and when asked, always has an excuse for why he can’t pitch in. I am exhausted and this is so unfair!”

Anger, another emotion caregivers often feel, can lead to resentment towards not only your care recipient but other family members as well. You may feel that others are not helping out enough or that you are being criticized. If your insights aren’t accurate, a perceived slight can fuel the anger within you. The person towards whom you feel angry may not even be aware of your feelings, and if you don’t find a way to deal with your emotional response, you may be the one who suffers most. You may be able to

release some of this anger by venting to a close friend or by joining a support group where you can share your feelings. Some people find that writing in a journal about those things they are uncomfortable sharing with anyone else may help them put things into perspective.

“I can’t sleep because I have so much on my mind ... What will happen now that my husband is no longer able to do the yard work? How will I find the money to hire someone? How will I manage if he falls in the middle of the night? Will we be able to afford the therapy he needs? How will I cope if I’m not sleeping?”

Worry can overwhelm caregivers and lead them into loneliness. Not knowing what is ahead for you and your care recipient can be very worrying, however dwelling on the “what ifs” will only trigger more worry, creating a cycle that may be hard to break. Worry itself can be stressful, leading to sleep disturbance, overeating, and even burnout. Try to change your thoughts by breaking the cycle with meditation or re-direction, through hobbies or exercise. However, if your worry becomes too obsessive, you may need to seek counseling to help you cope.

These are just a few of the emotions caregivers can feel on a daily basis, but the important thing to remember is that they can be overcome.

Guma slàn dhut! Take care, be well!

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.

Can Supplements Affect the Medication You Take?

By Brenda Sangster, Support Coordinator, Capital District

Do you sometimes take both over the counter dietary supplements and prescribed medications? Do you give your care recipient supplements along with their medications? Have you ever wondered whether taking both supplements and meds might cause side effects?

According to the US Food and Drug Administration, “a dietary supplement is a product intended for ingestion that contains a ‘dietary ingredient’ intended to add further nutritional value to (supplement) the diet.” Dietary ingredients may be one or more of several substances, among which may be vitamins, minerals, herbs, and amino acids. Supplements can take many forms, including tablets, capsules, softgels, gelpcaps, liquids, or powders.

Supplement vendors report that their products can have a wide range of beneficial effects.



Vitamin C, for example, is thought to strengthen the immune system, St. John’s wort to help with depression, glucosamine to replace cartilage in the joints, goji berries to ward off macular degeneration, and omega 3 wild fish oil to manage heart disease.

I recently read an article in *Prevention.com* titled “4 Supplements that Don’t Mix with Meds”. The supplements discussed include St. John’s wort, licorice, feverfew, and turmeric. Turmeric is sometimes claimed to be one of the “world’s healthiest foods”. In the dietary supplement literature it is stated to be an anti-inflammatory. The authors of the *Prevention.com* article, however, argue that turmeric should not be taken with blood thinners, as it may interact with medications like warfarin to increase the possibility of bleeding.

To learn more about your medications, talk to your pharmacist. Caregivers Nova Scotia also partners with community pharmacists when we present our *Safe Medicines for Seniors & Caregivers* workshop.

To find out more, like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, visit the events page on our website, or call our toll-free number at 1.877.488.7390.

Safe Medicines for Seniors & Caregivers

Prescription and over the counter medicine has the potential to improve health and well-being. But when not taken properly, it can sometimes cause other health-related problems.

Please join us, the NSCC Nursing Students, and Paul Zinck (MacDonnells Pharmacy, St. Peters) for this informative workshop.

When: Wednesday, May 25th at 12:30 pm
Refreshments provided

Where: NSCC Strait Area Campus
226 Reeves St.
Port Hawkesbury

This event is FREE of charge but you are asked to register by calling Maggie Roach-Ganaway at 902.371.3883, or our toll-free number: 1.877.488.7390

Did you know ...

- 18.3% of Nova Scotians are seniors
- 28% - 40% of all medication prescribed is for seniors
- 30% of all emergency room visits are drug related

Caregivers
Nova Scotia
for friends and family giving care

Our newest initiative ...

Giving care at home to a loved one who is dying?

Caregivers Nova Scotia is introducing a new initiative

Caregiver Tele-Connect

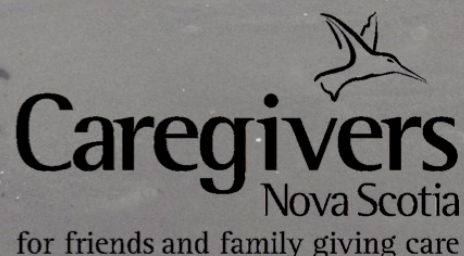
This is an 8-week facilitated telephone support group for people giving care to a loved one at home during end-of-life.

This initiative can help you to:

- **Discuss** your concerns about end-of-life caregiving
 - **Share** with others on a similar journey
 - **Learn** how to prepare for a death at home

Please contact Caregivers Nova Scotia at 1.877.488.7390 for more information.

This initiative is funded by the
Nova Scotia
Department of Health and Wellness


Caregivers
Nova Scotia
for friends and family giving care