

The Beacon

Spring/Summer 2021

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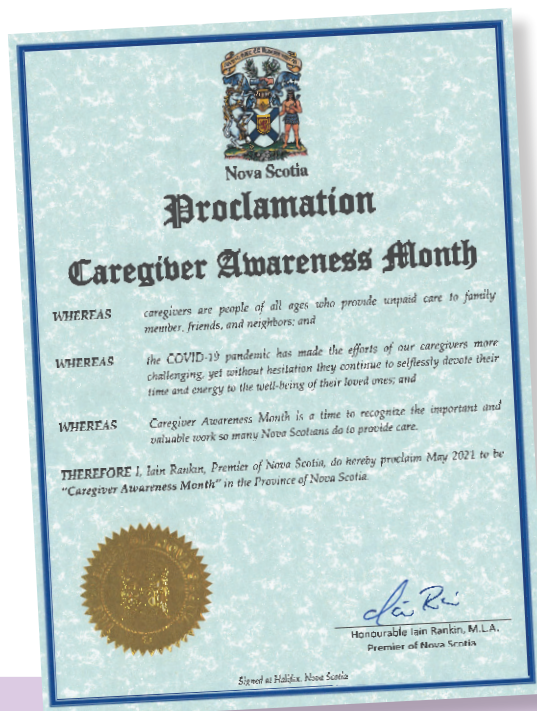
Thank you to the
Department of Health & Wellness
- Continuing Care Branch
for their ongoing support.

Caregivers Awareness Month

Here at Caregivers Nova Scotia (CNS) our mission is to provide support and education to unpaid family and friend caregivers, raise public awareness, and influence public policy regarding caregiving issues. May is Caregiver Awareness Month and we strive to raise public awareness by recognizing the invaluable contributions that caregivers make on a daily basis all over the province.



We are joining forces with caregiving organizations across Canada to promote awareness of caregiving with #caregiveraware2021. Follow along with us on Facebook (@caregiversNS) and Twitter (@caregiversNS) to help us recognize all that caregivers are doing.



As the new Executive Director at CNS, I am humbled and in awe of the unending dedication, care, and support caregivers provide to loved ones and in these difficult times that is even more evident. Our team is committed to doing all we can to support, educate, and advocate for caregivers in Nova Scotia, in May, and all through the year.

Jenny Theriault
Executive Director

Survey

Starting on April 30, 2021 we are conducting a caregiver survey. This questionnaire will help Caregivers Nova Scotia better understand how the services currently available are working for you and help determine methods of improvement, moving forward. We encourage all caregivers to take 10 minutes to share your experience with us. Find the survey online here: <https://api.legerweb.com/CaregiversNS>. The survey will be open until Sunday, May 16, 2021. We thank you in advance if you are able to participate.

Asking For Help

An Important Piece of the Caregiving Puzzle

Jennine Wilson



When I asked people who attend my support groups what came to mind when they heard the words “asking for help,” some of the responses were; “It’s really hard,” “I feel like I am inconveniencing people,” “I don’t think I am worthy of it,” “what right do I have to ask, people are busy with their own lives,” “I should be able to do this on my own,” and “It takes courage and I am shy.”

Why is asking for help so hard? Present society has moved away from, “it takes a village” thinking, to “I need to be independent to be successful.” We have a fear of appearing needy, or incompetent. We have difficulty trusting others to do the “job” right. We experience guilt, especially when the person we care for does not want outside help to come in. It may seem easier to do it yourself to get things in order, than to pass on the responsibility to someone else. Our worry for our loved one makes it is hard to let go of control and we believe it is our lot to bare.

What can help us begin to ask for help?

- Changing our mind set from asking for help as a sign of weakness to asking for help as a sign of strength and a valuable skill.
- Acknowledging you will need help.
- Starting the conversation with the person who will need care right when you know the journey is beginning. Asking who to include in the ongoing conversation.
- Starting small, testing the waters to see how it feels. Practice saying yes to offers.
- Understanding that asking for help is not a selfish act! We are hardwired to help, we are highly social beings and helping others makes us feel good. Give that gift to others.
- Being conscious that people cannot read our minds and will not know what we need unless we tell them.

Write down your needs and share them. People will be grateful. They have been wanting and waiting to know how they can help. You could use the Caregivers NS “Helper Sign Up Sheet.”

- Being open to letting go of control and understanding your way is not the only way.
- Trusting that people will say no if they are unable to help.
- Believing that there is benefit for the person you care for to have a circle and socialize with others.

The caregivers in my support groups who were already receiving help responded; “Don’t wait,” “The sooner you start the easier it is for everyone,” “It gets easier once you start,” “be gracious, grateful and accept,” “it is a great skill to develop,” and “be open to others way of doing things, leaving the house helped with that.”

In my own caregiving journey after months of not having a full night sleep, I finally acknowledged and accepted that I needed help; however, my parents did not agree. In the end I needed to resort to bringing in a counsellor to help convince them. It was not a long conversation. Inviting a counsellor in made them realize the seriousness of my need and accept.

In hindsight I would have started the conversation right when I returned home to be the primary caregiver, involved my siblings to see who I could count on for what, and asked each of my parents’ friends they wanted included in the circle of care. I would have used Caregivers NS “Where to Begin Guide” to facilitate the conversations. I would have researched which care providers I would eventually involve and I would have tried to change my own mindset to asking for help is a strength. Meeting in a place of vulnerability is a powerful place and asking for help is an important piece of the caregiving puzzle.

In Loving Memory of Jennifer Briand

By Brenda Sangster

After more than a decade of illness due to cancer, our colleague and dear friend Jennifer, died on January 9, 2021.

Jennifer started at Caregivers Nova Scotia (CNS) in 2013 as Caregiver Support Coordinator serving South Shore, South West, and Annapolis Valley districts. She established caregiver support services and awareness in all those regions. It was a huge undertaking but Jennifer made sure that direct support services were offered to caregivers and that support has only grown over the years. Jennifer was dedicated to the lives of every caregiver that she supported. She was always compassionate, kind, supportive and concerned for their well-being. She impacted so many caregivers in big and small ways over the years and she will be remembered for her huge heart.

We have collected just a small sample of the many kind words from caregivers and colleagues who were lucky enough to have known Jennifer.

"It was a pleasure working with her and many caregivers profited from her wisdom."

"Jennifer was a truly wonderful support, helping me to understand the changes my mother was experiencing and navigate my evolving role in her life."

"I remember well how articulate, perceptive and calm Jennifer was."

"She provided such compassionate and professional care through her work. I had a great honour of getting to know Jennifer. She was a lovely human being".

"She was always a pleasure to work with – great knowledge and so caring!"

"Jennifer had an unforgettable kindness that undoubtedly left footprints on all the hearts she touched."

"She always replied to my questions promptly and with such kindness."

"She was a lovely soul; so caring with a joyful spirit and calming nature all in one."

"Jennifer was empathetic, genuine, and compassionate. She was always quick to respond, always supportive, always had something in mind that

might help with the particular situation."

"What a lovely caring human being. She was so kind, gentle and sweet! It was wonderful to have her leading our group!"

"Jennifer's kind and caring spirit will be forever remembered in the joy she brought to everyone she came in contact with."

"It was a pleasure working with Jennifer over the years. She truly was a classy lady, kind, warm, caring, thoughtful and always had such a gentle smile. She will be missed."

"Jennifer was a very caring dedicated individual who always put her clients and their families first. She always enjoyed speaking with CCA students to help them understand Caregivers NS and the resources they offered. It was a pleasure to know Jennifer."

Jennifer is missed, but not forgotten. The impact she made on caregivers and the CNS organization will be felt for years to come. Her dedication to caregivers and their families was outstanding and overflowed with compassion. We are all better for knowing her.



Glass Half Empty or Half Full?

Therese Henman-Phillips

You are probably familiar with the proverb “Is the glass half empty or half full?” It’s a common expression we float around, used to express an individual’s pessimism or optimism. Recently I quoted that phrase to someone in my life who was being affected by his circumstances. He had never heard it before and asked me to clarify. I suggested that simply put, he should try and focus on his blessings as opposed to his troubles. I wasn’t saying he didn’t need to address his troubles, but by focusing on the negative and what was going wrong, he was being further impacted emotionally, spiritually and mentally.

As a caregiver and professional, I know the importance of self care both physically and mentally. I also know how difficult self care can be from a practical sense especially when competing demands intersect. COVID has further complicated this. Eating well, getting proper sleep and exercise and perhaps a nice spa day are all good practices and something we should strive for, but we also have powerful tools from within that can support our mental wellness and in turn, all aspects of our self care are known to improve. This shift in focus, changing our inner narrative, is something we don’t need to schedule or pay for. Interested?

In my role of support coordinator at CNS, self care is something I feel compelled to mention in my contact with caregivers. When I first stepped into this role, I felt extremely challenged repeating those words, recognizing personally how difficult it is to achieve self care when in the caregiver role. At an intellectual level I know the theory - take care of yourself and in turn, the level of care you can provide physically and emotionally to your loved one increases. Just like on the airplane, you need to take the oxygen yourself before you can save others. It all makes sense but some days, doesn’t seem within reach. But what is within reach?

Recognizing from a practical level that I often cannot

provide the caregivers I encounter in my work with all they need to improve their physical circumstances, I try and help them focus on the powerful tool they have, their mind, to support them in how they perceive their situation and how they are reacting to it. These gifts lie within each of us.

What kinds of gifts am I referring to? These are the gifts of gratitude, joy and positive thinking. Mindset is very important to our self care and is within our reach every day. Gratitude is us appreciating, valuing and enjoying the gifts we have. It’s a shift in focus and can have far reaching effects on our physical and emotional health. You can’t always change your circumstances but you can change how you perceive and react to them. Negative thinking can be detrimental, causing the brain to shut down, for us to become more stressed and can create a multitude of other issues in our lives. Simply put, a shift in thinking can impact how you feel about yourself and others and create joy in our lives.



There are many tools that can help us achieve this positive and grateful mindset. A quick search would reveal ideas such as identifying 3 things daily that make you happy or that you are thankful for,

keeping a journal of these thoughts, using positive self talk, drawing energy from nature, breathing to restore calm in your body, laughter, playfulness, and movement. The list can go on. These things you can try at any time and in any place and they have the ability to restore us and change our perspective. It helps us keep in sight what is really important and to recognize and accept our limits. In turn, the payoff to other aspects of our health are huge and these positive feelings are often known to spread beyond our wellbeing to others.

If you have practices that you consider contribute to your self care that you would like to share, we would love to hear from you. Your success might help another! Feel free to email them to me at support@caregiversns.org.

Hummingbirds and Caregivers: Similarities of the Journeys Taken

Catherine Parent

Caregivers Nova Scotia uses the hummingbird throughout our organization and website as our symbol. The hummingbird is symbolic because it possesses similar traits that we observe and admire in caregivers.

A few facts about the hummingbird; it is one of the smallest birds that exist, they are recognized easily by their iridescent jewel and gem coloured feathers, and they have a remarkable memory. They have acute sight and auditory skills. The hummingbird is unique due to its ability to fly frontwards, backwards, and upside down. Hummingbirds can change their direction of flight, almost instantly as required. Their wings allow them to hover in mid-air. Hummingbirds are known to possess impressive endurance to reach their desired destinations and can survive extreme environments on their journeys. They are known to be curious, investigative, and inquisitive creatures who can recognize friendly environments.

A few of the known and perceived personality traits of the hummingbird include their ease and boundless energy to move at high speeds, and their strength to seek out the next available opportunity, they often fly solo, and perform what are considered impossible feats. The hummingbird is usually poised in nature, exhibiting grace, precision, composure, and brilliance. Hummingbirds are believed to be extremely intelligent and extroverted creatures, focussing outward into the world around them and gaining energy and knowledge from other creatures in their environment.

Caregivers often perform the impossible. They work at lightning speed with boundless energy levels, survive extreme environments and circumstances, and often fly solo, similar to the hummingbird's plight. Caregivers in our province exhibit extraordinary levels of resilience and energy in their busy lives, they have shown impressive endurance and strength in challenging times, and they remain focussed on the well-being of their care recipients. Caregivers adapt to the ongoing changes and challenges in their caregiving roles, and continue to be proactive individuals seeking out supports required to go the distance.

The ongoing challenges of Covid19 and how it is affecting the lives of caregivers on so many levels, is hopefully a speed bump in the road through the journey of care. It is known and acknowledged that caregivers throughout the province have (and continue to) go the distance within their journeys. A heartfelt thank you is extended to each caregiver.

Seniors' Safety Program

Leanne Taylor



The Seniors' Safety Program addresses safety concerns of seniors by promoting education and awareness around senior abuse prevention, crime prevention, and

safety and health issues. The program enhances communication between seniors and the police by providing information, educational sessions, and referral services to seniors through direct contact with the Seniors' Safety Coordinator. The Seniors' Safety Program is community-based. The Seniors' Safety Coordinator works in close partnership with local police agencies and a large network of local and provincial partners. Typically, services are offered to seniors throughout a county, in their own homes, or at a convenient location within the community. This program is open to all seniors, and self-referrals can be made. For more information or to find a Seniors' Safety Coordinator in your area visit: https://novascotia.ca/seniors/senior_safety_programs.asp. Thank you to all the Senior Safety Coordinators for all the amazing work you do to support seniors in Nova Scotia.

AGM

Our Annual General Meeting
will be held Saturday, June 26 - 11am

This meeting will take place virtually.

Please call 902.421.7390
for more information and to register.



Frequently Asked Questions

Maggie Roach-Ganaway

One of the biggest aspects of our work as Caregiver Support Coordinators is to answer questions that arise when people run into roadblocks when caring for a loved one and when they need help and they need it NOW! Below are some of the common questions that we hear from our caregivers on a regular basis.

I am a caring for my aging parent/spouse/grandparent/aunt/uncle/friend and need help. Where can I get help?

When someone calls looking for help we try to get as much information about their situation as we can to be able get the appropriate help for them. Most often we refer them to Continuing Care Services as they are the organization that provides services like: Home Care, Respite Care, Financial Support and access to Long Term Care. They can be reached by calling 1-800-225-7225 from anywhere in the province.

I have an autistic child and need to find resources to help with their care, where can I find it?

Autism Nova Scotia has a great website with all of their programs and services at: autismnovascotia.ca. Nova Scotia Respite Partnership also provide a great guide for children with disabilities at: [Nova-Scotia-Respite-Guide-for-Caregivers-of-Children-and-Adults-with-Disabilities.pdf](#)

My care recipient has been in the hospital for a while, but they are being discharged and will need supports in place. Who will help me with getting the help I need?

When someone is discharged from the hospital it is important to ensure supports are in place in the home prior to release. The social worker for that floor will find out what supports are available from the family first. They then will coordinate with the hospital-based Continuing Care Coordinator to arrange for any extra supports that are needed. There are a number of ways this can be accomplished.

1. Having Home Care come in to help with personal care, meal preparation and/or light housekeeping.
2. If any medical procedures are required, Continuing Care will arrange for VON to come in to perform and monitor these procedures for the required period of time.
3. Home First Program funding is provided to the health authority to support care options for clients who require support or services greater than or different from regular home care services, to avoid admission to hospital or to be discharged from hospital. The objective is for individuals to receive care at home, in their communities, where decisions about longer term care can occur.
4. Continuing Care can also arrange any equipment (wheelchair, hospital bed, etc.) and therapies (oxygen, OT, PT, etc.) that they may need in order for them to go home.

My care recipient is showing signs of memory loss and I would like to have them assessed. What is the best way to get this accomplished?

Having someone assessed can take time due to the lack of qualified specialists in the province. However, the first step is to talk to a family physician about any concerns so that they can do a cognitive test at that time. Depending on the results of that testing, they may refer them to a specialist. It is important to seek help as soon as you notice any changes, as there are medications that may help to slow progression if it is caught early enough.

Are there any financial supports available for family/friend caregivers?

Yes. Continuing Care have a number of financial support programs for eligible caregivers to help them stay in their role as long as possible.

The Caregiver Benefit recognizes the important role of caregivers in their efforts to assist loved ones and friends. The program is intended for caregivers of low-income adults who have a high level of disability or impairment, as determined by a Continuing Care assessment. If the caregiver and the care recipient are both eligible for the program, the caregiver will receive \$400 per month.

The Supportive Care Program supports eligible Nova Scotians with cognitive impairments (difficulty thinking, concentrating, remembering, etc.) by providing them with up to \$1,000/month for Home Support Services (personal care, respite, meal preparation and household chores).

The Self-Managed Care Program allows people with physical disabilities to hire their own care providers and develop their own care plans, which gives them control over the services they need and the providers they choose. In addition, clients may appoint a third party "Care Manager" to act on their behalf in carrying out these tasks.

The Personal Alert Assistance Program provides financial assistance to eligible, low-income seniors over the age of 65, and to Nova Scotians age 19 years or older living with an acquired brain injury. The program provides up to \$480/year to reimbursement for the purchase of a personal alert assistance service.

Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL) Program. Funding is provided to the health authority to provide services such as transportation, yard work, heavy house cleaning, and assistance with errands, to maintain individuals in their own homes, thus eliminating, reducing, or delaying the need for long-term care.

For more information on any of these programs please call the CNS Caregiver Support Coordinator in your area.

Project Lifesaver

Leanne Taylor

Project Lifesaver of Nova Scotia, is dedicated to assisting and responding to caregivers with loved ones who wander. This program is for anyone who may be at risk of becoming unaware of their location. Clients registered with Project Lifesaver wear a personalized bracelet, which is a one-ounce battery operated radio wrist transmitter that emits a unique automatic tracking signal every second, 24 hours a day. The program equips and trains local Ground Search & Rescue agencies in an active response system to help with the increasing problem of locating wandering individuals before they fall victim to elements or accidents. For more information contact: contactus@projectlifesaver.info or (902) 365-3362. Thank you to all the volunteers that make Project Lifesaver of NS a reality and the Ground Search & Rescue teams across Nova Scotia.



Hummingbird Cake

INGREDIENTS

2 cups of pecans (or shredded coconut)
3 cups of all purpose flour
1 teaspoon of baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 cups of mashed bananas (4 ripe bananas)
1 can (8oz) crushed pineapple (slightly drained)
3 large eggs, at room temperature
2/3 cup (160 ml) vegetable or coconut oil
1 cup packed brown sugar
3/4 cup (150 g) granulated sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

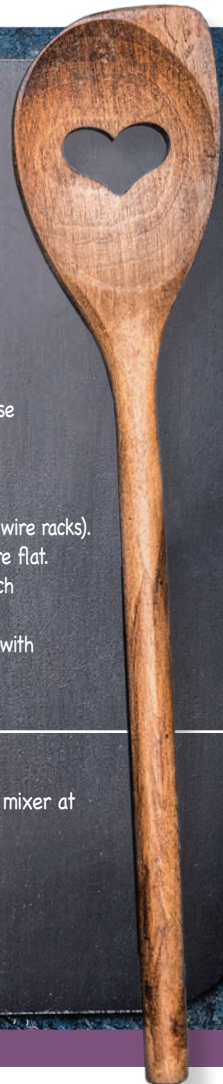
METHOD

Preheat oven to 300°F (149°C)
Spread the pecans or coconut onto a lined baking sheet.
Toast for 6 minutes. Remove from the oven.
Turn the oven up to 350°F (177°C), grease and lightly flour three 9 inch cake pans.
Whisk the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, allspice, and salt together in a large bowl
Whisk the remaining ingredients in a medium bowl. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and whisk until completely combined.
Fold in 1 1/2 cups of toasted pecans (or coconut or both). Save the remainder of these items as a garnish, if preferred.
Spread the batter evenly between the three pans and bake for 25-28 minutes.
Rotate the pans halfway through baking.
Remove the cakes from the oven and allow them to cool completely (preferably on wire racks).
Once cooled, remove the cakes from the pan and level off the tops so that they are flat.
Make the frosting and assemble the cake with one layer of frosting in between each layer of cake.
The remaining frosting can be spread over the top of the assembled cake. Garnish with the remaining pecans and coconut, if desired.

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

Two (8 oz each) blocks cream cheese
3/4 cup (175 g) unsalted butter
(softened at room temperature)
5 cups (600 g) confectioner's sugar
1 Tablespoon milk
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon salt

In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese and butter together, using a whisk or mixer at high speed until smooth and creamy.
Add the remaining ingredients and beat on low speed for 30 seconds.
Switch to high speed and beat for 2 additional minutes.



Caregiver Support Coordinators

Nicole Byers - South Shore



I am pleased to join the Caregivers NS team on the South Shore. I was born and raised in Lunenburg, so I am overjoyed to remain living and working in this area.

I come to CNS with a background in social work, specifically child protection. I spent two years working as a child protection social worker in Northern Labrador,

before moving back to NS in 2017. I worked with child protection in NS for another 2.5 years before I decided that for my own personal health and wellbeing, I had to do something different.

In November 2019, I spent a short time providing care to my partner as they were recovering from surgery. The care that my partner needed was for a short, determined period of time, but I was able to gain a better understanding of the demands of being a caregiver.

In my free time I like to cook, bake, and drink copious amounts of coffee. I enjoy spending time with my partner and my family, playing with my dog and cat, reading, doing jigsaw puzzles, and going to the beach.

Although being a caregiver can be thankless work, I recognize the strength it takes to provide such a service to someone in your life. I hope to be able to provide you with support, information, and advocacy when you reach out to Caregivers NS. Remember, you don't have to do it alone.

Contact me via phone (902-514-1281) or email (southshore@caregiversns.org).

JoAnne Connors - Halifax



After an 8 year absence, I am grateful to be back with Caregivers Nova Scotia in the Halifax Region. Previously, I was with CNS from 2009 - 2013 as Support Coordinator for Cape Breton, and thoroughly enjoyed serving caregivers in the region. I am bilingual, and a trained Behavioural Interventionist, and have worked with caregivers all over the world,

from the UK to the US. Although each of our journeys is unique, caregivers face similar issues, challenges, and successes, everywhere.

Caregiving has been part of my life since I was 12 years old. As a youth, I was an active part of my Grandmother's care and this informed my life-long passion of supporting people, through my education and career choices. My caregiving journey continued through adulthood with supporting my father, who had ALS, and my mother, who succumbed to a very aggressive cancer.

Understanding the legislation, programs and services available to caregivers, and supporting them through their challenges and questions, to leverage everything possible to ease their burden, is the crux of our work. CNS has many programs to assist caregivers with problem solving issues that come up, from Support Groups, to our phone line, to Educational Workshops like Managing Caregiver Stress.

It is truly an honour to be working with CNS, and the vital work done here. I look forward to working with caregivers in the Capital Region, facilitating support groups and information sessions, and being a part of the team of caring people who work here. It's great to be back! If you are looking for any information, have any questions, or simply want to talk, please feel free to contact us.



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](http://www.CaregiversNS.org) and sign up at the bottom of any page.