



## POTENTIAL VIGNETTES AND SPOKESPERSONS

### National Family Caregivers Month 2003

**T**hese selected examples from family experiences illustrate how the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) is making a difference in the American caregiving experience. Contact information is available should you want to seek permission to use these stories for Caregivers Month 2003 or for potential media interviews.

#### **Helping caregivers gain access to supportive services**

A daughter who was commuting to college about 100 miles from home contacted the AAA staff about her concern for her family. Her 83-year-old mother who needed surgery was caring for both a terminally ill, bedfast husband and a 57-year-old son with developmental disabilities. The AAA caregiver staff arranged for respite while the mother had surgery; contacted the county board of mental retardation and developmental disabilities to follow-up with the son's situation; and worked with the mother to help her accept limited services from hospice for her husband. The daughter was able to continue working on her nursing degree during this crisis.

#### **Promoting better care-related decisions**

Mr. D. is a 51-year-old District of Columbia resident who is the sole caregiver for his blind mother. Mr. D. is employed outside the home and, consequently, worries about his mother

during the day. Educational seminars provided through the NFCSP were invaluable for Mr. D. At the seminars, he learned about community resources and insurance issues, and received helpful tips from fellow caregivers. The opportunity to learn from other caregivers has helped him plan his mother's care and encouraged him to accept help from others.

#### **Allowing caregivers to remain in the workforce**

A man transferred his 90-year-old mother from her home in the south to his northern Minnesota town this year. He was able to set her up in a senior high rise but did not realize until she was there that she needed so many support services. He had a new job that required him to be on the road several days a week and wasn't sure how this would affect her adjustment. The Caregivers program allowed for connections to be made to the state services for the blind, meals on wheels, a friendly visitor program, and volunteer driver services. Four months later the care recipient is making new friends in her building, is called and visited weekly, receives daily meals, has her appliances marked so that she can recognize certain settings by touch, and receives books on tape through the mail. When her son is on the road, he is comforted in knowing his mother is receiving food, can manage her daily living, and has transportation if needed for outings.



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

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## Helping caregivers take a break

An 80-year-old caregiver is caring for her 102-year-old mother. She receives assistance with respite in the evenings. The services give her a break so that she can continue to meet the day-to-day challenges of caregiving. When you talk with this caregiver, she will not tell you that this role is a chore or a job, but that it is an honor to be entrusted with the care of her dear mother, a commitment for which she is thankful. She was selected her state's Caregiver of the Year for 2001.

## Supporting long-distance caregiving

Long-distance caregiving is a difficult challenge for many adult children. In Minnesota, several families use the NFCSP as a connecting point (phone/email/mail) for their loved ones because they (the adult children) live a town away, a state away, or even across the country. Through the NFCSP, home visits are arranged and distant caregivers are kept informed of the status of the care recipient. When family caregivers do visit, they readily receive information through the program.

## Preventing unwanted out-of-home placement

Mr. and Mrs. B. live in a rural Ohio community and are trying to remain independent in their own home. Mrs. B. is 81 years old and has difficulty walking, as well as limited use of her right arm. Her husband provides daily care for his wife despite his own physical problems. The Caregivers Support Program set up services for this couple two times a week. Having a nurse's aide come into the home allows Mr. B. time to run errands without worrying about Mrs. B being left alone. Mr. B. states now that he cannot imagine how they would cope without the assistance of the program.

## Preventing foster care placement

An elderly Kentucky grandmother has taken over caregiving responsibilities for her 11-year-old grandson. She found herself in need of outpatient surgery that would involve about a week of recovery at home. Knowing that her recovery period would severely limit

her ability to provide care to her grandson, she postponed the surgery twice. Hearing of the NFCSP, the grandmother contacted her local Area Agency to ask whether she and her grandson would qualify for some temporary assistance under the program. The agency was able to arrange for help. A home care worker was able to meet the housekeeping and chore demands of a household with a child present (preparing snacks and meals, laundry, clean-up, and the like) and at the same time provide personal care assistance to the grandmother until she was better able to manage for herself. She was worried that without such help, she might have to seek out temporary foster care for her grandson, a less than ideal situation, since he had already suffered through a difficult separation from his natural parent, as well as protracted foster care prior to his grandmother obtaining legal custody.

## Reaching out to special populations and communities

Mrs. I. is a 78-year-old Japanese care recipient who is legally blind and has diabetes and arthritis. She is prone to falls and is unable to strictly control her diet on her own, or to prepare her meals. She lives with her 47-year-old son, Jed, who is responsible for running a food shipping business in Alaska. He is the sole family caregiver. The family could afford only a few hours of respite help a week and due to demands of his business, Jed was unable to provide help to his mother during the day. The Alaska Caregiver Program provided the necessary funds and a senior companion to provide respite services during the week; the family private-pays for respite help on the weekends. What was a caregiving crisis for Jed is now a stabilized situation.