



# Centered News

December 2023



## Reflecting on the Past Year

In December we like to reflect on the past year and take a moment to review our goals and celebrate accomplishments. This has been a big year with the expansion to two locations and continuing to grow our offerings for caregivers and those living with chronic conditions. Thank you to all who have given their time, energy and resources to make this all possible. We look forward to 2024 and another great year of growth!

### Events & Groups at the Center

The Family Caregivers Center offers events and groups in two locations and also via Zoom. Check out this month's *Centered Events* calendar for details

### Thank you for your support!

The Family Caregivers Center is donor-funded. Gifts help support programs for family caregivers. If you would like to give, please [click here](#) or call Mercy's Foundation at (319) 398-6206. Thanks to all our wonderful donors!

## 2023 Accomplishments

### March

- Companion respite resumed for caregivers needing respite while attending an event at the Center.

### April

- In partnership with the Connections program, adult day for early stage, a replication guide was created.
- Spirituality in Caregiving was offered.
- Together in Song Chorus held it's Spring concert with songs from the 60's.

### May

- Volunteer appreciation event at the DeWolf Innovation Center was held.
- A pilot series was held for those living with early stage dementia.

### June

- The DeWolf Innovation Center Ribbon-Cutting was celebrated with over 400 people in attendance!
- The Family Caregivers Center expanded to two locations.
- Kathy Good celebrated the completion of her book, "My World Wore a Bow Tie," and held a book signing.

### August

- Reporter Julie Minda with Catholic Health World visited the DeWolf Innovation Center and Family Caregivers Center and interviewed staff, volunteers, and caregivers.

- Kathy Krapfl celebrated 5 years with the Family Caregivers Center!

### September

- A partnership with the Cedar Rapids Metro Parkinson's Association began with groups and events for those living with Parkinson's and their care partners held in both locations.
- Kitchen Table Art Series was held and facilitated by artist Tara Moorman.

### October

- The Men's Caregiver Coffee expanded to two groups due to growing attendance.
- Shared information about the Center at the Walk to End Alzheimer's.
- A bi-monthly Memory Café was started for those living with dementia and their care partners.

### November

- The Together in Song Chorus held it's first concert at the DeWolf Innovation Center.
- 50 care packages were distributed as part of National Caregiver Appreciation month.
- The second annual Innovation Forum was held with presentations by aging and dementia experts.
- Participated in Caregiver Wellness Day at the Kirkwood Hotel, the first in-person wellness day since pre-COVID-19.



## 10 Tips for Caregivers During the Holidays

For some family caregivers, the holidays can be a joyful time when spirits are lighter. It feels good to care for loved ones and enjoy time together, celebrating with family traditions. For many, the holidays also bring added stress to an already busy caregiver who finds there's even more to do during the holidays. Here are some tips to help you make it through the holiday season with more joy and less stress.

1. **Focus on what is most meaningful.** Focus on the things that matter most to you (family, food, traditions, etc.) .
2. **Simplify your holiday activities.** If everything you have done in holidays past seem overwhelming, simplify your activities (put out less décor, have a pot luck instead of cooking everything, adjust the location of the celebration, etc.)
3. **Start new traditions.** Instead of focusing on losses and what you and/or your loved ones aren't able to do this year, try doing something new.
4. **Adjust meals.** Simplify the menu, split up the grocery shopping and cooking among other family members, purchase all or part of meals at a local grocery store or restaurant – either fully cooked or ready for you to cook at home, eat at someone else's home, or at a restaurant.
5. **Approach gift-giving more efficiently.** Try shopping online, ask a friend to shop for you, purchase gift cards or try giving the gift of time or an experience together.
6. **Don't forget self-care.** As caregivers, we give and give and give, and during the holidays we give even more. Practicing the tips above and incorporating your own self-care practices (exercise, quality rest, good conversation, etc.) over the holidays can help.

*Adapted from AARP article by Amy Goyer*



### Home for the holidays?

If you're visiting your loved one over the holidays and notice a need for additional support or assistance, the Family Caregivers Center is here for you. Please contact the Center at (319) 221-8866 or email [fcc@mercyare.org](mailto:fcc@mercyare.org) and we would be happy to help!

## Fall Innovation Series Highlight



The first Caring for Parents with Chronic Conditions Innovation Series was held in August and September. Facilitators of the six week series were Center volunteers Jody Weigel and Paula Burgmeier. This group of caregivers was very grateful to meet and share experiences with other adult children caring for their parents. Weekly topics included frustration, communication, ambiguous loss, guilt and finding balance. At the final session, the ten participants were asked to name their experience of this group in one word. Here are their collective and reflective responses:

“Perseverance... Remembering...Growth in communication...Weightlessness...Guilt... Freedom...Relief... Seen & Heard...Comfortable... Kindness...Patience”

One narrative from a caregiver's evaluation explains, “I learned that I am doing the best that I can and that the sandwich generation is a hard place to be.”

## Event Showcase: Kitchen Table Art Series



In the four week Kitchen Table Art Series participants practiced various forms of expressive print making with guidance from artist Tara Moorman. The art created during this series was displayed at the Together in Song Chorus Concert on November 10, 2023. Above are photos from this fun series and we hope to offer more experiences with art in the future!

## You've Heard of a Power of Attorney...But Have You Heard of a Designee for Final Disposition ?

I was recently asked, "What do you wish more people knew about funeral arrangements?"

I wish more people would talk about how they want to be remembered. I wish more people knew how healing a ceremony can be.

Mostly, I wish more people knew that Power of Attorney ends at death. Upon death, your POA cannot authorize burial or cremation. These responsibilities fall to the legal next-of-kin as defined by law.

According to Iowa Code Chapter 144C, the person(s) responsible for making decisions about cremation, burial, and any ceremonies held after death are, in order (*if there are more than one surviving member*):



- Spouse (if not legally separated)
- Adult Child(ren)
- Parent(s)
- Adult Grandchild(ren)
- Adult Sibling(s)
- Grandparent(s)
- Legal Next of Kin - named to inherit the estate
- Friend - willing to assume liability and financial responsibility
- Medical Examiner
- Court Order

For example: a person has no designee, they are divorced, have no children or grandchildren, and their parents are deceased. This means **all** the person's adult siblings must agree to authorize the final arrangements. As you can imagine, this can create discord amongst survivors.

However, Iowa law allows you to name who you want to authorize your final arrangements through a simple legal document call the **Declaration of Designee for Final Disposition**. A designee takes top decision-making priority when death occurs, surpassing next-of-kin.

You can pick someone you trust, *now*, and know that your wishes will be carried out *later*, just as you intended.

-Amy A. Hart, Licensed Funeral Director & Certified Celebrant, Murdoch Funeral Homes & Cremation Service

## Navigating Long Term Care & Long Term Care Insurance

After two years of in-home caregivers, many falls and concussions, several major seizures, almost no mobility, and a swift cognitive decline, I came to the conclusion I could no longer care for my husband at home. He was 71 years old. I cried and cried.



That is not what he wanted, of course, but I was afraid I would hurt myself trying to lift or move him. It took me and two caregivers to move him from bed to chair and back. It is a hard decision to place your spouse of 44 years in the hands of someone else.

He had good care in a skilled nursing facility while needing short term rehab in the past. So I thought I'd place him where he was familiar and knew the staff. I was floored when \$10,500 was quoted to me for one month of care for my husband, a nine year stroke survivor! I was prepared to pay my portion outside of what long term care insurance covered for his care in a good facility, but unprepared for the very high cost of care in the Fall of 2023.

I had been assured by the long term care insurance policy that it would begin coverage upon moving in. It did not! Read your policy! The long term care insurance would cover \$6,415 per month after 90 days. After losing my breakfast, and sort of recovering from the shock, I went into full "work the problem" mode. I gathered information about care facilities within a 60 mile radius and began calling. I found out that the cost range in my area was from \$7,500 to \$11,000 per month, depending on room occupancy. I spent hours on the phone while my sister checked on ratings online. Even care centers with lower ratings were high cost!

After the paper and phone search, I narrowed a list within 30 miles that I could afford my portion of the cost. I scheduled visits. I chose a lovely, affordable facility in Traer, Iowa where he has settled in and received wonderful care.

- Robbie Fye Leach, Caregiver



*"Volunteer Spotlights" highlights our wonderful volunteers who give of their time and talents. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, call the Center at (319) 221-8866 or email [fcgc@mercy.org](mailto:fcgc@mercy.org) to learn more.*

I have a one brother and four sisters and growing up lived just a couple of blocks from the Iowa State Fair grounds in Des Moines. In 1968 our family moved to a farm in Madison



**Martha  
"Marty"  
Welton**

County Iowa and I graduated from Winterset High School in 1973. I moved to Cedar Rapids shortly after graduation. I met my husband John through a mutual friend in 1975 and we were married in 1977. We have two sons who live and work in Illinois and Minnesota.

I was a stay at home Mom and did volunteer work at the elementary school until the boys went to middle school. I went back to work in accounting and data entry. My longest years of employment were for Mercy Medical Center, retiring after 15 years. I then became a caregiver for my mom and my mother-in-law. My mother was showing signs of dementia and my mother-in-law was losing her sight..

When I got overwhelmed with my mom's care, I was referred by a friend to see Kathy Good. Kathy was able to help me understand that asking for help could not only help me but help my mom as well. My mother passed away from Alzheimer's last year and my mother-in-law now lives in an assisted living community.

I am a three-year breast cancer survivor and was struggling with memory changes and depression. I saw an article about Mercy's Center for Memory Health and made an appointment. Recently I decided that I wanted to volunteer somewhere and I mentioned it to Lindsay at the Memory Center and she recommended talking to Abby. In exploring volunteer opportunities, Abby shared the need for homemade cookies for gatherings at the Center. I signed up and now bake weekly!

I love doing this as I get to bake again and John gets to be my taste tester. I also get to get out all those old church cookbooks for great recipes as well as make the recipes passed down from grandmothers and aunts. I love baking for the holidays and look forward to making and sharing my favorite cookies and treats. My favorite recipe is Gingerbread cookies from my Grandmother who was a preachers wife and baked for their congregation. That recipe makes 8 to 10 dozen cookies.

I am so blessed to be volunteering for such a kind and appreciative group of people. Volunteering gives me a sense of purpose as well as feeling wanted, needed and appreciated.



## From Marty's Kitchen to Yours

### Grandma Hughes Applesauce Cookies

- 1 cup shortening
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups applesauce
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Optional: nuts and/or raisins

- 1) Mix the shortening, granulated sugar, brown sugar and vanilla. Mix in two eggs.
- 2) In a separate bowl, combine the dry ingredients: flour, baking powder, baking soda, nutmeg, ground cloves, and salt.
- 3) Slowly alternate adding dry ingredients and applesauce to the sugar and shortening mixture.
- 4) Bake at 400 degrees for 10-12 minutes.

*Note:* This recipe can also be used for bread and muffins. For bread or muffins, use 3 cups of flour. If making bread or muffins, bake at 350 until toothpick comes out clean.

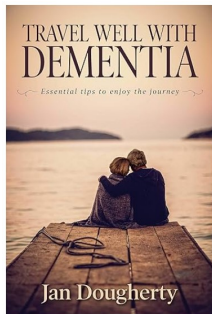
## One-on-One Meetings

Individual meetings with a trained volunteer or staff member are available for caregivers interested in discussing their situation. During a one-on-one, we help caregivers by providing reassurance, guidance, education, and connection to community and Center resources. To request a one-on-one meeting, please call the Center at (319) 221-8866 or email [fcgc@mercy.org](mailto:fcgc@mercy.org).

## Book Review

### Travel Well with Dementia

by Jan Dougherty



If you have been wondering about the possibilities of planning a trip with someone living with dementia, this book will help you plan thoroughly to make it a positive experience. Whether you are planning a trip across the state to visit family or across the country on an adventure, this book will cover in amazing detail the steps needed.

The author is a nurse, leader, speaker, innovator and advocate for those living with dementia. She understands very well the pros and cons of travel but believes that a well-planned trip can bring memories that will last long past the lives of those involved. She emphasizes that each person is different and family members will need to craft a unique plan, be realistic and flexible when carrying it out (or deciding that the trip is not a good idea).

This comprehensive book guides you step by step through the planning process, underscoring that a well thought out plan includes careful consideration of the person's routines and challenges in detail ensuring the whole vacation goes smoothly. She includes many tips to make each step successful, including devices that can be helpful (such as GPS locators) and clothing and supplies that make a trip easier.

Each chapter is affirming, repeating the positive results from a well-planned trip and creating memories to be shared again and again. She encourages flexibility and letting go of perfection as key to an enjoyable travel experience.

With this book, you can assess whether travel is a good idea, and if so, explore ways to plan a memorable vacation with your loved one.

The book is available from the Family Caregivers Center Library, but you may want a copy of your own (\$15). As an added feature, the book provides lists of websites that are useful in procuring items and accessing the best information from TSA, airlines and airports.

- Dot Hinman, Content Writer



## Veterans & Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a disorder of the central nervous system characterized by impairment or death of dopamine-producing cells in the brain. The disease causes a variety of symptoms related to muscle movement, including rigidity, delayed movement, poor balance, and tremors. Non-motor symptoms of PD include sleep disturbances, urinary dysfunction, constipation, swallowing problems, mood disorders and cognitive deficits. The exact cause of PD is unknown. Most researchers agree that the disease is caused by both genetic and environmental factors (chemicals, toxins, head trauma) and by interactions between the two.

In 2010, the VA recognized PD as a presumptive service-connected disorder associated with Agent Orange or other herbicide exposures during military service. Veterans with PD who were exposed to herbicides during their service may be eligible for disability compensation and health care. In 2021, VA added atypical Parkinsonism to the list of conditions presumptively associated with Agent Orange exposure. Atypical Parkinsonism refers to a group of diseases with Parkinson's-like symptoms that do not respond well to drug treatment.

The Parkinson's Foundation and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) have partnered to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life for veterans living with Parkinson's. While living with Parkinson's can be challenging, an early diagnosis and beginning treatment can help people live well.

The Cedar Rapids Metro Parkinson's Association will be hosting a special ***Veterans and Parkinson's*** event with the Parkinson's Foundation on Environmental Exposures in Veterans with Parkinson's Disease. **The event is free and will be held on Thursday, December 14, 2023 from 3 to 4:30 p.m. at the DeWolf Innovation Center.** All veterans, their family members, as well as anyone interested in learning more about environmental exposures and Parkinson's Disease are welcome. Learn more about the event and register on our website [www.crmetroparkinsons.com](http://www.crmetroparkinsons.com), or email [kriscaeron@crmetroparkinsons.com](mailto:kriscaeron@crmetroparkinsons.com)

## About the Center

The Family Caregivers Center of Mercy is a resource for family caregivers who are caring for adults living with chronic conditions, such as dementia, Parkinson's, cancer, diabetes, heart and lung diseases, arthritis, COPD, etc.

Caregivers may often feel alone, overwhelmed and are not sure where to find help. Sometimes it is difficult to even know what help is needed. Through individual meetings, trained volunteers and staff members listen to caregivers to help them identify needs, strengths, answer questions and connect to community resources. Support groups, multi-week discussion groups, and educational sessions help caregivers connect to others in similar circumstances with access to trusted resources in two welcoming and supportive environments.

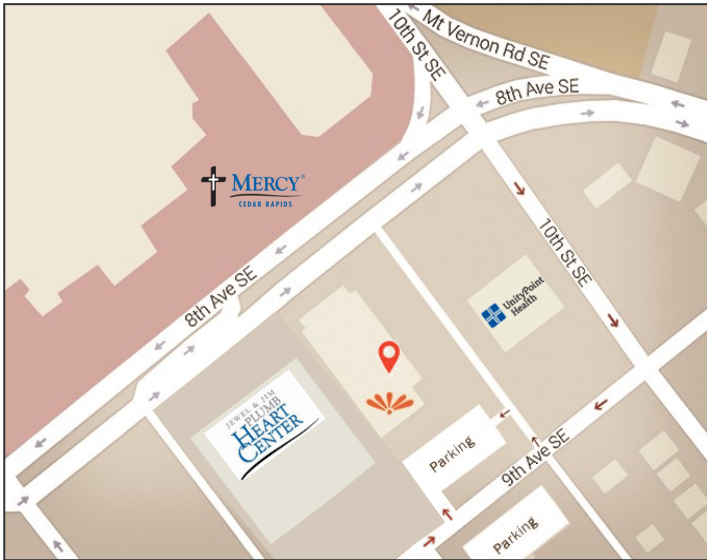
## The Center Provides

- One-on-one meetings to discuss your caregiving situation
- Men's, Women's and Wednesday Afternoon Coffee Groups
- Multi-week supportive learning and discussion groups
- Multi-week series for caregivers whose loved-one has died
- Educational events
- Question & Answer sessions (i.e. Veteran's benefits and Medicaid)
- Together in Song Chorus
- Master Gardener events
- Up-to-date resource lists and connection to trusted community resources
- Book lending library

### Family Caregivers Center at the...

#### Downtown- 901 Building

901 8th Ave SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401



**Directions:** Take 8th Avenue and turn onto 7th Street. Travel one block south, then turn left onto 9th Avenue. Travel 1<sup>1/2</sup> blocks east and turn into the parking lot.

**Parking:** Parking is available in the in the back of the building, where the Family Caregivers Center's entrance can be found.

### Family Caregivers Center at the...

#### DeWolf Innovation Center

9000 C Ave NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402



**Directions:** Take C Ave NE, heading North, go past St. Mark's Lutheran Church, to Hallmar Village Senior Living Community and the Innovation Center entrance. Turn right into the drive and proceed to the main parking lot directly in front of the Chris & Suzy DeWolf Family Innovation Center for Aging and Dementia.

Enter the building and check in at the Family Caregivers Center information desk on your left.

## Contact Us

(319) 221-8866 | [fcgc@mercycare.org](mailto:fcgc@mercycare.org) | [familycaregiverscenter.org](http://familycaregiverscenter.org)