



Centered News

January 2024

Goodbyes & New Beginnings



We are sad that Lisa Hawk who has been the Family Caregivers Center counselor for the last two years has moved to Arizona to be closer to her daughter and family. We thank her for all the wonderful support she has provided! We will miss her but wish her the very best as she starts a “new beginning.” Recently Lisa wrote about change – probably thinking about her own change and knowing that her leaving is a big change for some of you. Her thoughts

below are also applicable for all of us as change is something we all deal with everyday!

Caregiver experiences are everchanging and change can be difficult for many. It's normal to experience a variety of feelings from shock and disorientation to anger and sadness when faced with loss or change. You may find you swing between optimism and pessimism in trying to navigate what this change means for you. Part of the process in moving forward and accepting is shifting your focus away from what was lost to the “new normal.”

One way to cope with change is to build your resilience skills. Resilience is the ability to adapt and bounce back when things don't go as planned. Focusing on things that are in your control and seeing set-backs as temporary foster a sense of empowerment and help us form a more positive outlook for the future.

During the time Lisa was a counselor at the Family Caregivers Center we learned more about the support that caregivers need and how it can be provided. We learned that the important aspect of support is having an ongoing connection with a trusted person who hears and understands.

Sometimes it is important for caregivers to work through deeper emotional issues that make caregiving more difficult by talking with a counselor. In the last couple of years, the counseling environment has changed. The Center has found counselors in the community who can provide caregiver support and eligibility for insurance reimbursement has expanded. We have learned a great deal and plan to use that knowledge in hiring the person who will replace Lisa. Look for additional information in upcoming newsletters.

-Kathy Good, Director & Co-Founder

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!



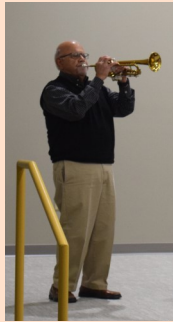
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Event Highlight

Together in Song Chorus Concert



The Together in Song Chorus, the Family Caregivers Center's chorus for those living with chronic conditions, care partners and volunteer singers, ended its' 2023 season with a concert on November 10. This season and concert were the first held at the DeWolf Innovation Center. The chorus of close to fifty members directed by Steve Nurre and accompanied by Mary Nurre performed a medley of tunes to an audience of almost three hundred, filling the Cambridge Auditorium. The concert featured special trumpet music by Moe Igram and violinist Sara Preus.



Refreshments made by chorus members and volunteers were served after the concert. Art from the Fall 2023 Kitchen Table Art Series was displayed. In celebration of National Family Caregivers Month and Veterans Day,

family caregivers took home orange Gerbera daisies and Veterans took home flags. Donations of canned goods and boxed foods were also collected and later delivered to Catherine's Cupboard, Mercy's food pantry supporting staff and volunteers.

The next Together in Song season starts in March 2024 and we would love to have you join us! If you are interested in joining or learning more, please contact the Family Caregivers Center at (319) 221-8866 or fcgc@mercyare.org.



Together in Song Gratitude



Written by Keith Williams, Caregiver & Chorus Member

"In a world where hearts grow frail and minds are dim,
A shining light of hope, Together in Song, begins.
To the DeWolf Innovation Center we owe our praise,
For bringing music's joy in myriad beautiful ways.

Kathy's dream, a beacon, a haven for those in need,
For caregivers and afflicted, it's a gift indeed.
To Abby and her dedicated team, we extend our hand,
For orchestrating a concert that helped us all understand.

Nearly fifty strong, our chorus members unite,
In compassion and support, we find our guiding light.
To the volunteers who labored with hearts so true,
Your effort and love shine bright in all that you do.

Director Steve, a maestro with a heart full of grace,
And Mary, the accompanist, in each note they embrace.
With their talents and dedication, they lead us along,
A chorus of unity, where hearts find their song.

Together in Song, we're forever in your debt,
For the music you've shared, we will never forget.
To the DeWolf Innovation Center, heartfelt "thank you"
we say,
For enriching our lives in a such a profound way.

In this symphony of care, compassion, and delight,
We're grateful for each moment, both day and night.
For the love, the music, and the joy we've found,
Our deepest appreciation to all, so profound.

With harmony in our hearts, we sing and rejoice,
For Together in Song, we've found our voice.
Thank you to all, for the love you've shown,
In this journey of life, together we've grown."

Shifting from "THINK" Tank to "DO" Tank

2023 Innovation Forum Review

The DeWolf Innovation Center held its' second annual Innovation Forum on November 29, 2023. It was the first Innovation Forum held at the DeWolf Innovation Center with close to 125 in attendance. This year's forum focused on turning ideas into action and highlighted several examples of initiatives occurring locally and nationally.



The first presentation was a panel presented by people living with early stage dementia. Sue Rowbotham, Center

volunteer and facilitator, shared how the group formed and what they learned as they met. Group members, Gary Crandall, Alan Eilers, Steve Noll, April Neuendorf, Barb Robinson, and Lora Williams, shared common themes (isolation, anxiety, loss, stigma) expressed throughout an eight-week discussion group. This group formed after a need to give people living with dementia a voice was identified. During the group, relationships formed and the group has continued to meet and support each other.



Next, Karen Love, retired CEO of Dementia Action Alliance, and Rev. Dr. Cynthia Huling Hummel shared why a dementia diagnosis does not need to be a death sentence. Cynthia, a person living with early onset

Alzheimer's, shared her difficult journey to finding a diagnosis as her abilities changed affecting her work as a minister. Rev. Hummel has since become an advocate for those living with dementia, care partners and students who may work or interact with those living with dementia. Cynthia is actively involved in research serving on the National Academics of Sciences Alzheimer's Decadel Study and was appointed to be the first person living with dementia to serve on the National Advisory Council on Aging.

Cynthia and Karen described a manual, *Pathways to Well-Being with Dementia*, written by the Dementia Action Alliance. It provides essential information, help, hope and inspiration for and by persons living with dementia and their care partners. To download for free or request a copy of the manual for \$30, visit the Dementia Action Alliance website at www.daanow.org.

Clay and Debbie Jones, co-chairs of the National Alzheimer's Association Zenith Society, joined the forum via Zoom to share upcoming research advancements in the fight against Alzheimer's. Debbie was a caregiver for her mother who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and ever since has been a staunch advocate. Clay and Debbie attended the global Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Amsterdam. They expressed new found hope in the ground breaking research surrounding new practices in diagnosing dementia through biomarkers and new personalized pharmaceutical treatments.

Dr. Yogesh Shah, M.D. from Broadlawns Geriatric and Memory Center and Rev. Dr. Jonathan Whitfield, Pastor at Corinthian Baptist Church,

presented on the relationship between dementia and zip codes in the U.S.

Dr. Shah shared statistics of higher percentages of

dementia present in African American and Latino communities. Dr. Shah said this was due to lack of access to resources preventing and supporting health conditions that can lead to dementia. Dr. Shah and Rev. Dr. Whitfield have partnered through a coalition of Central Iowa medical providers, religious entities, and nonprofit organizations called VAXDSM to mitigate social determinates to sustain health in minority communities.



Dr. Daejin Kim, Assistant Professor of Interior Design at Iowa State University, presented about a recent student project focused on home design needs to supporting accessibility and reducing falls for older adults in Charles City, Iowa. Dr. Kim shared the importance of design in supporting older adults to remain in their homes of supporting rural communities as resources and support can be scarce.

-Abby Weirather, Manager

Long Distance Caregiving: Assessing Needs

Long distance caregiving requires a different set of caregiving skills. As you see your loved one less often, visits become a time to assess needs and determine if additional support is required. See the tips below to learn how to make your visits count.

Seeing your loved one less often, means visits will generally include more than socializing. While visiting, caregivers should arrive prepared to take care of business, home and health needs. You may attend medical appointments, visit an attorney or bank, or talk to local friends and family to get an update. There may be housekeeping needs or errands to run. As you step into the home, pay attention to things that may have changed or are out of the norm for your loved one. Below are some questions to consider as you visit:

- Is there food in the refrigerator? Is it spoiled? Is the person eating regular meals?
- What is the condition of the inside and outside of the home? Has it changed?
- Are the bills paid? Are there piles of unopened mail?
- What is the person's appearance like? Is the person bathing and grooming?
- Is the person still able to drive safely?
- Are there any changes in their behavior? Are they showing signs of forgetfulness?
- Have they had any recent accidents (ie. falls, vehicle accidents, small fires, etc.) or injuries?



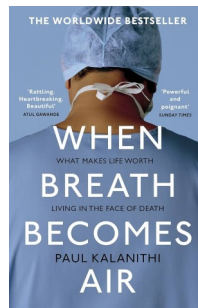
Long distance caregiving often requires caregivers to be detectives. There are many warning signs a caregiver should be looking for. Some are more noticeable than others. Pay attention to hints of changes that may be hidden due to embarrassment, the desire to remain independent, changing cognitive abilities or to protect and avoid burdening their family members.

Assessing needs with a critical eye can help you determine their need for additional support and promote the quality of life and independence of your loved one moving forward.

Adapted from Today's Caregiver article by Jennifer Bradley
<https://caregiver.com/articles/long-distance-assessing-needs/>

Book Review

When Breath Becomes Air
By Paul Kalanithi



For readers of Atul Gawande, Andrew Solomon, and Anne Lamott, this book is a moving, exquisitely observed memoir by a young neurosurgeon faced with a terminal cancer diagnosis who attempts to answer the question "What makes a life worth living?"

At the age of thirty-six, on the verge of completing a decade's worth of training as a neurosurgeon, Paul Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. One day he was a doctor treating the dying, and the next he was a patient struggling to live. And just like that, the future he and his wife had imagined evaporated. *When Breath Becomes Air* chronicles Kalanithi's transformation from a naïve medical student "possessed," as he wrote, "by the question of what, given that all organisms die, makes a virtuous and meaningful life" into a neurosurgeon at Stanford working in the brain, the most critical place for human identity, and finally into a patient and new father confronting his own mortality.

What makes life worth living in the face of death? What do you do when the future, no longer a ladder toward your goals in life, flattens out into a perpetual present? What does it mean to have a child, to nurture a new life as another fades away? These are some of the questions Kalanithi wrestles with in this moving, exquisitely observed memoir.

Paul Kalanithi died in March 2015, while working on this book, yet his words live on as a guide and a gift to us all. "I began to realize that coming face to face with my own mortality, in a sense, had changed nothing and everything," he wrote. "Seven words from Samuel Beckett began to repeat in my head: 'I can't go on. I'll go on.'" *When Breath Becomes Air* is an unforgettable, life-affirming reflection on the challenge of facing death and on the relationship between doctor and patient, from a brilliant writer who became both.



“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@mercyare.com to learn more.

I grew up in a large family with six brothers and four sisters. Most still live in Minnesota though others are scattered from California to New Jersey, Minnesota to Texas. I believe the large family helped instill caregiving as a basic part of all our natures.



**Terri Cox
Volunteer**

I started working in restaurants cooking and serving to get through school, but stayed another six years because I enjoyed the work. Then I moved into an office to have more predictable hours with my family. That led to 40 years in credit and credit management before I retired. My husband Duane and I have two children and five grandchildren whom we treasure. Planning retirement was always about planning the next chapters of activity. Part of that plan was traveling, seeing grandchildren and volunteering.

As we were closing in on retirement, Duane’s mother developed dementia. With Helen living in Marion, Duane began providing the additional support she needed. We scrambled for information, and struggled trying to know what was needed, and what would be best for Helen. Eventually her journey led from her home to senior living to assisted living, punctuated with emergency room visits, hospital stays and challenges before arriving at a full nursing facility with a memory unit. The frustration and sense of being alone in the journey with Helen, made the decision to volunteer for the Center almost automatic when I heard about it. The Center is working to answer all the questions that challenged us, and to support people on their journeys.

My volunteer role has been and will continue to evolve. Currently clerical work, staffing the front desk, coffee making and prepping for events covers most of my time. I am enjoying chatting with all the individuals who come into the DeWolf Innovation Center for activities or appointments. I know that each day I can make a difference even if it is simply sharing a smile and saying ‘good morning’.

To anyone considering volunteering, my suggestion is get started. If the first role you try doesn’t ‘fit’, try another one. For caregivers, please find people with whom you can share and discuss your journey. There are others who understand, and may need your understanding of the journey they are traveling.

Caregiver Wellness Day

The Family Caregivers Center participated in Caregiver Wellness Day at the Kirkwood Hotel on November 6, 2023. Caregiver Wellness Day is a free annual event held for family caregivers that provides education, resources, respite and pampering. This was the first Caregiver Wellness Day held in person since 2019.



Proceeds from event sponsorship go to Heritage Area Agency on Aging, a close partner of the Center, and support caregivers referred from the Family Caregiver Center.

Thanks to all who attended and stopped by the Family Caregivers Center booth to say hello. We hope you can join us next year!

Simple Music Player

The Family Caregivers Center recently received a donation of Simple Music Players from Tom Hicks. Tom was a long distance caregiver for his parents. His dad, who lived with dementia, loved music. Tom found an accessible way, through the Simple Music Player, to bring his dad’s favorite music to his care center room. Tom downloaded his Dad’s favorite songs onto the Player. To play the music, his dad simply lifted the flap or pressed the clearly labeled buttons to adjust the sound or skip songs. The Player brought joy and comfort to both Tom and his dad and Tom’s hope is it will to you too.



The Family Caregivers Center has several Simple Music Players Tom donated for caregivers to check out. If you are interested, please call the Family Caregivers Center at (319) 221-8866. Tom is available to assist with set-up as needed. If you are interested in purchasing a Simple Music Player, visit the Alzheimer’s Store website at www.alzstore.com and search for The Simple Music Player.

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.

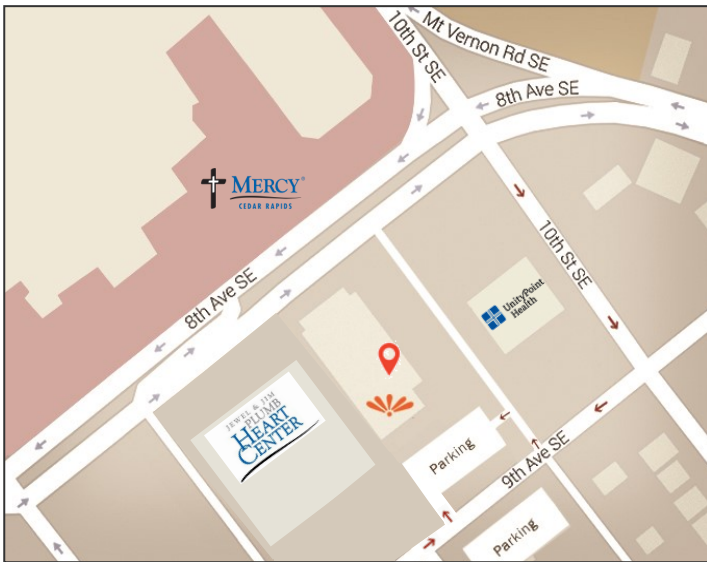
The Center Provides

- 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^{1/2} 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 | familycaregiverscenter.org