



Centered News

Welcoming Becky Krapfl

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 or call the Center at (319) 221-8866.

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!



Please join us in welcoming Becky Krapfl to the Family Caregivers Center team! Becky started on January 15 as the Caregiver Engagement Facilitator. She will primarily be providing support, education, and resources to caregivers and those living with chronic conditions. Her office will be at the DeWolf Innovation Center. Below is a message from Becky sharing more about her background and what she is looking forward to as a new staff member. Welcome Becky!

"Hi, I am Becky Krapfl and I am the new Caregiver Engagement Facilitator with the Family Caregivers Center. I graduated from the University of Iowa, School of Social Work and have been a social worker for 30 years, predominately in the healthcare field. I have 16+ years of experience as a hospice social worker and most recently added 'granny nanny' to my résumé.



"My husband, Bill, and I have been married for 35 years and have three adult sons. Our oldest and his wife live in Seattle as she completes a medical residency at the University of Washington. They welcomed our first grandbaby in April 2022. I was fortunate enough to be able to move to Seattle for a year to help with childcare as my son and daughter-in-law awaited a childcare opening. It was one of the greatest times of my life! Our middle son is an oncology pharmacist at Rush in Chicago, and our youngest lives in Tiffin and is a travel RN. Away from work, I enjoy time with family, reading, swimming and running. For those wondering, Kathy Krapfl, the Center's Office Coordinator, and my husband are distant relatives."



"I am a dedicated advocate for persons living with chronic conditions and their families and believe strongly in focusing on the strengths of individuals in offering support, resources and education. I look forward to being a part of an amazing, compassionate team, and partnering with the Mercy Center for Memory Health to grow services and support available to caregivers."

– Becky Krapfl, Caregiver Engagement Facilitator



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(319) 221-8866 | fcgc@mercyare.org | familycaregiverscenter.org

Guilt, Resentment & Acceptance

Loretta La Roche, expert in stress management, said, “There is so much grace in acceptance. It’s not an easy concept, but if you embrace it, you’ll find more peace than you ever imagined.”



I think Ms. La Roche is right, especially that acceptance is not an easy concept. It is not an easy task. Not an easy anything...but oh, so essential.

Caregivers usually have a gradual “getting used to the new normal”, but what is the actual process of getting used to a new normal? Is it planning, organizing, and implementing? Is it doctor appointments and logistics? Is it learning all you can about dementia, Parkinson's, TBIs and cancer? Yes.

There is, however, mental and emotional work that comes with accepting the new normal and I think that work can be even more difficult. Myriad emotions and forbidden thoughts are common for caregivers. Guilt and resentment can clog the path to acceptance of a challenging change in capacity for the care receiver.

The Family Caregivers Center offered a discussion and support series focused on guilt, resentment and acceptance. In the group, we discussed some explanations for why guilt and resentment happens.

- Guilt can set in when you believe you have the power to change something you cannot change. You then fail and feel guilt about that failure.



- Caregivers try their best to be patient, positive and sweet but it’s not always possible. When a lapse occurs, it is not an occasion for guilt.
- Caregivers do not have the power to change the fact that their person is not the same as they once were. If you believe you have that power, you may feel resentment toward your care receiver because they stand in the way of you making everything OK again.

I believe there is a difference between guilt and conscience. Guilt is not useful nor does it provide a moral path. Conscience, however, gives us a guide or a moral goodness that helps choose right over wrong.

- Focus on conscience, not guilt and you will feel the difference.
- Consider asking yourself if what you are afraid will happen if you stop piling on guilt. That fear can be larger than the guilt itself and can stop you from seeking the peace of acceptance.
- Remember you are human. This is not a cliché but an unavoidable fact. Accept **that**.
- As humans we are unique in our ability to use reason and logic, but that reasoning can make us feel like emotions are unnecessary, totally controllable, and secondary to thought.

Without emotions, we are not completely human.

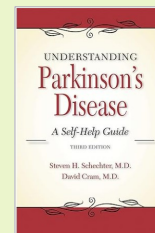
I believe emotions make us smarter, give us the ability to love, help us make better decision, and put the “care” and the “giving” into “caregiving.” If our emotions get in the way of being perfect caregivers, then we accept that we have flaws and continue to work on being more positive, not less human.

-Peg O'Rourke, Volunteer & Caregiver

Book Review

“Understanding Parkinson’s Disease: A Self-Help Guide”

Drs. D. Cram, S. Schechter & X. Gao



This is an excellent book for the newly diagnosed, providing a broad view of what can be expected in the journey ahead. If you’ve been told by your doctor, “You have Parkinson’s disease,” you probably found it difficult to hear those words. Such a diagnosis can be frightening and leave you filled with questions. How will it affect your life? What are your treatment options? These authors are uniquely qualified to understand your concerns. Steven Schechter, M.D., is a neurologist who has treated thousands of patients with Parkinson's disease (PD), and David Cram, M.D., lived with the disease himself. Among the topics they cover are: diagnosis; symptoms and stages; the emotional side of PD – conquering fear and denial; choosing the right health care team; drug therapy/medications and how they work; surgical options; deep brain stimulation; the importance of exercise; coping with day-to-day problems; helpful hints on traveling; and care for caregivers.

DeWolf Innovation Center News



Innotech Solutions Task Force

The Innotech Solutions Task Force at the DeWolf Innovation Center was formed to focus on the information, products, and assistive technology found in the Age- & Dementia-Friendly Smart Show Room and Kiosks.

Currently, the Task Force is a small, but mighty group of volunteers with a chair and two members. Mike Brogan, a former IT/IS entrepreneur, is the Task Force chair. Kristi Leonard became involved as a former caregiver with a connection to the Caregivers Center and a desire to give back. Kristi lives in Pella and is the Assistant Dean of Students at Central College. Julie Schlueter lives in Victoria, Minn., a Minneapolis suburb. She was born in Cedar Rapids and is a former caregiver. Julie met Kathy and Dave Good years ago at a tandem bike rally in Wisconsin.

The Task Force meets regularly via Zoom. This is what Mike had to say about the Task Force.

“We have a great group with various perspectives, which makes for good conversations. We have recently focused on securing the appropriate internet service to support the range of options and services at the Innovation Center working with Mercy’s IT. With the correct internet service and wireless coverage, we will be able to connect all of our demo devices wirelessly.

“In the smart showroom, we have Samsung Smart Appliances. These have been provided by Grand Appliance. We are working with Samsung on some education and operational training happening soon.

“Recently, we investigated a solution called Boundary Care, designed by a father and son team out of Minneapolis. Their wife/mother had dementia and they were looking for solutions to help her. When they didn’t find one, they invented their own. The application runs on an Apple Watch and collects important data and then reports it back to caregivers. We plan to test this product in the spring.

“Another solution we are testing is called Sociavi360. The Sociavi360 provides virtual education and counseling, as well as collects important information for the caregiver. In addition, we have been checking out complimentary organizations and services such as TechEnhancedLife and an organization in Johnson County called ‘Trail,’ focused on aging in place.”

– Mike Brogan, InnoTech Solutions Task Force Chair



“Ask Abby” is a column dedicated to answering caregiver questions. If you would like to submit a question, email it to fcgc@mercy.org.

“How do you know it is time for your loved one to move out of your home?”

I have explored this question with many caregivers the past couple months. While there are some black and white reasons someone may need care outside the home, the answer is really more gray and depends on each individual’s situation and support available.

But it may be time to consider a move, if:

- care needs have become overwhelming or too difficult for at-home care
- you are not able to find or afford adequate support in the home
- the home isn’t designed to meet your loved ones needs
- health or safety needs put you or your loved one at risk
- your health is suffering
- you are experiencing chronic, severe caregiver stress
- you feel in your heart it’s time.

This can be a very difficult, emotional decision. Assess both your and your loved one’s needs and abilities and remember that you are prioritizing the health and safety of both of you.

If you have thought about a move out of the home but are uncertain about next steps or don’t know if it is the right time, the Family Caregivers Center is happy to assist you. Please call us at (319) 221-8866 or email fcgc@mercy.org and request a one-on-one.

–Abby Weirather, Manager

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.

Building Friendships and Support Through “Living Your Best Life”

In March of 2023, The Family Caregivers Center of Mercy began a support group for people living with dementia as a pilot project! We have learned that offering a supportive community for people living with dementia is a very important way to support



their care partner. People want to connect with others who are having similar experiences. The participants in this pilot group have developed friendships and found camaraderie with each other. They laugh together, cry together, and help each other. Likewise, their caregivers have become friends and share their journeys with each other.

Volunteers Rick Zingher and Sue Rowbotham have facilitated these groups and have been integral to their success. The group participants, their care partners, along with the facilitators have even enjoyed a few potluck gatherings! The original group of six participants was featured on a panel at the November 2023 Forum at the DeWolf Innovation Center. They are advocates for living life purposefully and meaningfully and are champions of dispelling the stigma that can be part of living with a dementia diagnosis. They are truly “Living Your Best Life” which is the name of the group.

Two women in particular have become friends and want people to know how much “Living Your Best Life” has meant to them these past months:

“Being diagnosed with early onset dementia is devastating news. Then to try finding a support group for others like myself was trying. I was lucky enough to get to join the pilot support group through Mercy’s Family Caregivers Center. When I met the others in group I was beyond thrilled! I was no longer alone. I did cry for many groups but am finally better now. I met April in group. She felt bad for my crying and gave me a diamond dot art sunflower. She said when she was raising her kids, they couldn’t say sunflower so called them “hug flowers” instead. She wanted to let me

know that if I ever needed a hug, there was one at the ready. Her gift and kind words were so very much needed and appreciated. I have been blessed to get to know April more since then. She has become a sister friend to me. We can laugh or talk seriously about our diagnosis if needed. I consider her an “Earth Angel” in my life.”

-Lora Williams

“I am obsessed with my dementia support group! We commiserate and console so you don’t feel you are alone. For me, if these folks believe in me, I know I can do it! The mutual respect and caring in this group is like nothing I have experienced before.”

“Since I retired in 2021, friends have come and gone but when I least expected it, there is Lora! I was impressed when I first heard her story. She is the only one in our group that is still working and although she struggles at times, she has an amazing attitude and courage. We talk about the effects of this disease on our spouses and families and how to make the transition easier for our grown kids when it happens. We have tough conversations with no judgement and I am thankful for her advice.”

“We have also done things outside of our group meetings. We have gotten together outside of work for supper, coffee and lots of talking! I pick her up from work on the way to our group meeting so we have more time to talk. We have a lot of the same tastes in tv, movies and books. We also like lots of the same music and artists. We are planning an overnight in Minneapolis this coming spring/summer!”

“I appreciate the Caregivers’ Center more than anyone realizes. Without them, I would not have gained another family to help me get me through this part of my life. I would not have a great friend like Lora. Lora is kindred.”

-April Neuendorf



Diamond dot art sunflower April gifted Lora

As we celebrate the one-year anniversary of “Living Your Best Life”, it seems that this endeavor is no longer a pilot project but that it has become an integral part of our community! If you or a loved one would like to learn more about Living Your Best Life, let us know. We are happy to meet with you and help you decide if this group could be beneficial for you.

-Mary Ann Grobstich, Caregiver Community Facilitator



“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@mercycare.com to learn more.

I grew up on a farm near Williamsburg, Iowa. I graduated from UNI with a BA in elementary education, teaching mostly fifth grade for 12 years. Later I earned a Masters degree in library science and finished my 33 year career with the Cedar Rapids



Grace Ferreter

Community School District as an elementary school librarian/media specialist. I've been married to Dennis for over 53 years. We have a son who lives outside Chicago with our 12-year-old granddaughter, and our daughter lives in Greenwich, CT with sons 9 and 7. We try to get together as often as we can, but the great distances doesn't make it as frequent as we would like. Since retirement, I have joined two book clubs and volunteer. I enjoy meeting my friends for coffee and lunch.

Since I spend about half a year in Arizona, I am not able to do volunteer tasks that require continual contact with caregivers. I have, however, found a niche for volunteering that works for me. When I am in Cedar Rapids, I bake cookies for meetings and help get the newsletter ready for mailing. Over the years I have been given various projects that I can do where I am. Recently I have added the responsibility of posting all the Center's monthly events on Hoopla which goes to the Penny Saver.

I met Kathy Good about 30 years ago through Kennedy parent support groups. I have a lot of respect for her. When I heard about the Family Caregivers Center, I thought it sounded like a much needed group and I wanted to offer my help. I continue to believe in the importance of the cause and am willing to help in any way I can.

I have found the staff and volunteers at the Center to be friendly, dedicated people. We all seem to sense the importance of the work the Center does and want to do our best to help it be successful.

I would encourage anyone to volunteer at the Center as your time and talents are greatly appreciated by the staff. Also, know you will be contributing to a very worthy cause.

Resource Review



Staying Independent

Most seniors want to remain independent as long as possible, but are there ways to increase the likelihood of this happening? Iowa State University Extension and Outreach suggests a number of important considerations.

- **Healthy Diet Choices.** Make a healthy diet choice every day. Try a bunch of grapes (have you tried them frozen?), an apple, or carrot sticks for a crunchy snack full of important vitamins. Pick up a package of Hy-Vee “short cuts” for easy to grab healthy snacks.
- **Protein gives you energy.** Easy choices to add protein in your diet include cheese, milk, or peanut butter. Ensure or Boost drinks can be an easy lunch and supply a hefty dose of protein. Try a shake with ice cream, a bottle of Ensure and some kind of fruit for an easy protein filled lunch.
- **Making meals for one or two.** Making meals for one or two persons can be challenging. The grocery store dietician can give you ideas, and help you find healthy options including frozen meals, if that easiest for you.
- **Physical activity is important.** Set a timer to get up and move around at least once every hour. Check out 15 minute easy chair yoga videos on YouTube. Walking is an excellent exercise, free and readily available!
- **Planning ahead.** Take time now to do some planning, to anticipate extra help when it's needed. Organize all the documents your family will need (bank, credit cards, doctors names and numbers, pharmacy, attorney, financial planner, caregivers, neighbors, etc.) Think about who can offer help if you would need it. Tour local facilities and check out home-care availability. The Family Caregivers Center has the Comprehensive Planning Guide workbook and a class coming in late April 2024 to get you started.

For more information and helpful tips, visit the ISU Extension & Outreach website <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/stay-independent>.

-Dot Hinman, Content Writer

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.

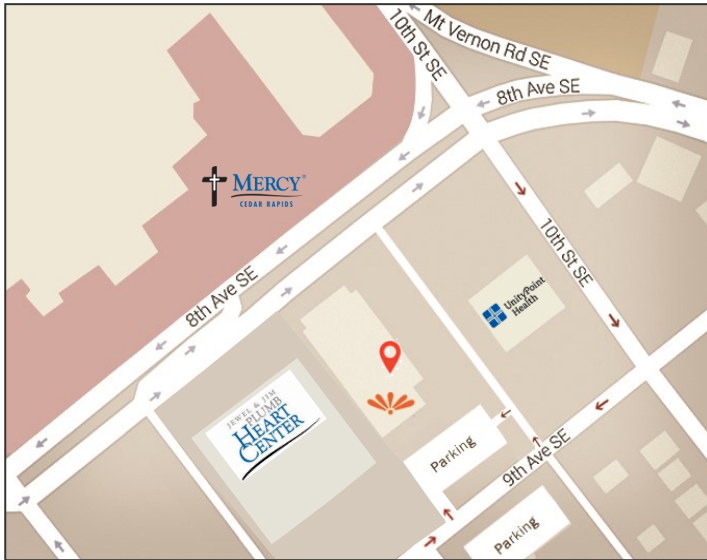
The Center Provides

- 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