



Centered News

May 2024

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!

Promoting Well-Being Through Art

This month, the Family Caregivers Center will be holding several series in which caregivers and persons living with chronic conditions can engage in and benefit from the arts. The Creative Art Series will be held at 10 a.m. on Fridays starting May 10 at the DeWolf Innovation Center. The poetry series will occur at 10 a.m. on Thursdays starting May 9 at the 901 Building and via Zoom.

Art exists in a variety of forms – drawing, painting, collaging, sculpting clay, writing poetry, cake decorating, knitting, etc. Art can be fun and entertaining, but also therapeutic. Plus, it doesn't have to be a prescribed therapy to be beneficial because it can be practiced in the comfort of your home. For instance, drawing or painting can distract from the stress of caregiving or living with a chronic condition as it can be soothing, centering and enjoyable. Likewise, listening to music can be relaxing, and various studies have shown a benefit to sleep quality and stress reduction. Practicing art with or around others can also reduce isolation and grow lasting relationships centered around a common interest.



Bill Cooley participating in the Art Series held Fall 2023

Meanwhile, creative journaling or poetry writing is a form of self expression and a way to process thoughts and feelings, especially in trying or overwhelming times. Practicing art regularly can also promote emotional resilience and become a coping mechanism.

“Creativity in and of itself is important for remaining healthy, remaining connected to yourself and connected to the world,” said Christiane Strange, former president of the American Art Therapy Association.

The great thing about art is that you don't have to be a professional to do it because art is for everyone, regardless of their skill. The benefits can come from anything that engages your mind in a creative way and expands your imagination. While it can be nerve-wracking to get started or be concerned about the outcome, the benefits are really in the process of creating and not in the outcome.

So, we encourage you today to engage in art. Join a group, pick up a new hobby or resume an old favorite pastime. Join the upcoming series. Whatever you decide, we hope you find relaxation, healing, connection and some joy in the process.

*Abby Weirather, Manager
Sources: Mayo Clinic, NPR*



Downtown - 901 Building | 901 8th Ave. SE | Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
DeWolf Innovation Center | 9000 C Ave. NE | Cedar Rapids, IA 52402
(319) 221-8866 | fcgc@mercyare.org | familycaregiverscenter.org

A Caregiver's Perspective

We Get To Be Human By Les Deal

Here is something I never expected to learn through caregiving: I learned that we are lucky we're human. Human behavior shows up when something we're doing is not working.

In caregiving, we get absorbed in our duties and are hell-bent on getting everything done. However, there are times, like always, when we overdo it. There are plenty of times when out-of-the-ordinary stuff happens. We refer to such occurrences as "one more thing." There is no room for one more thing! In that moment, we become human; we get temporarily angry or frustrated and say or do things we wish we hadn't.



In our apology, we might refer to the outburst as I'm "only" human. I finally learned that, in that moment, I was lucky to be human. The behavior brought me to apologize.

Apologizing is humbling. Humbleness comes from the heart. In that state, I reconnected to my loved one, my wife, Wendee, which brought love back into my efforts. Feeling love for her while doing things brought a whole different outcome. If we look closely at the situation, we can see that our "get 'er-done" attitude pushed us beyond our limits. If it wasn't for the human outburst, we would overload ourselves. The outburst is the body in self-preservation. In doing so, it brings us back to our humble, heartfelt self.

The part of ourselves that we call "human" is like a stop sign that says enough is enough. STOP! Granted, it may look outrageous or out of line, but if we think of ourselves realistically, it takes something outrageous to cause us to stop and take note. If reasoning could get us to slow down or stop, we would have done it. Our body, our mind, our very existence is saying to stop this insane drive. Luckily, it is done in a crass way, which leads us to offer an apology. The need to apologize comes from the heart; that's where we had slipped from in the first place.

Be thankful for being "human." Our human part is a lifesaver for us and for our loved one. Being human is not something to be ashamed of and certainly nothing to feel guilty about; human is a part of all of us, a gift from our creation. My point is not only to apologize for our outburst, but to follow our heart and make changes. As I see it, being human is a warning system to save us from our unhealthy behavior, as well as help us be successful. It was a happy day when I finally accepted "human" as a gift. Instead of fighting human behavior, we can rejoice. Through acceptance, we get to be human!

A Season for Renewal

National Renewal Day is May 4. I did not realize there was a specific day recognized for renewal, but it makes sense as Spring is generally seen as a time of new beginnings. Merriam-Webster defines renewal as "the state of being made new, fresh or strong again: the state of being renewed." How lovely the thought of being made fresh, strong or new again!

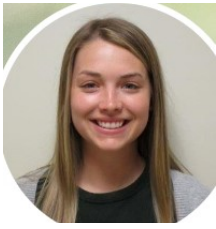
Just as the trees bud and the flowers sprout and the grass grows, sometimes we need a new beginning, as well. This could be as mundane as spring cleaning or putting out new rugs or towels, or as profound as refreshing your soul or renewing your faith. Too often, caregivers put their own needs behind the needs of others. Be kind to yourself. Reconnect with who you are, what you enjoy outside of a caregiving role and who you enjoy being around.

You don't have to have all of the answers at once. Simple changes can have a profound influence on you, your attitude, your ability to be available to others and your overall sense of well-being. Communicate honestly about what you are feeling and what you might need; nobody can read your mind and you can't read anybody else's. Find what brings you joy – even in minute doses – and do it. Go for a walk, meet a friend, do yoga, eat the pizza! Everything in life is a balance. Be compassionate, especially with yourself. We are frequently our own biggest critic. Sometimes, the journey is arduous; look for the moments of joy. Acknowledge and accept that you WILL need a break at some point, a period of renewal. This is a good thing! Happy Spring!



– Becky Krapfl, Caregiver
Engagement Specialist

What do Speech Language Pathologists do?



Allison Prybil, MA, CCC-SLP
Speech Pathologist
Mercy Speech Therapy

Speech Language Pathologists (SLP) provide specialized evaluations and subsequent treatments in:

- **Speech** – Related to the physical movements of your mouth and tongue to create sounds.
- **Voice** – Related to our loudness level, pitch and vocal quality. SLPs offer a variety of voice treatments; however, a well-known program is the Lee Silverman Voice Treatment (LSVT), specifically designed for Parkinson’s Disease.
- **Language** – Related to spoken and written language; listening; processing; production; reading; writing; and social interactions.
- **Cognition** – Related to memory and thinking. Tasks such as attention, memory, problem-solving, organization and more.
- **Swallowing** – Related to ease and ability to chew and transition food and liquids from your mouth to your stomach. SLPs’ primary focus is on ensuring adequate airway protection. Contact a physician if the following occur while eating/drinking: feeling food stuck in your throat, frequent coughing, frequent throat clearing or observation of a wet-sounding voice.

How do I connect with an SLP?

To connect with an SLP, you’ll need a referral from a medical professional. With your medical professional, discuss your current concerns and interest in SLP services, and request a referral be sent to your preferred location with SLP services. Once the referral is placed, either you can call and set up your evaluation or a scheduler will call to assist with the set up of your initial evaluation.

What does it cost to receive SLP services?

The cost of SLP services is largely variable based on the type of insurance you have. Most insurances will cover the initial evaluation, subsequent treatment sessions may be covered 100% and others may require a co-payment. Contact billing and/or your direct insurance companies for specific questions regarding your policies and coverage.

What are the benefits of SLP services?

Speech therapy is a proven, effective treatment to improve everyone’s goals within the SLP scope of practice. Benefits include, but aren’t limited to, improved self-esteem; increased independence; improved ability to comprehend and express ideas/thoughts/feelings; enhanced vocal quality; better swallow function; and overall improved quality of life.

Tips & Tricks From an SLP

- Come to therapy with goals for what YOU want to improve and ideas for how you may get there. Then, let your therapist help guide you in the right direction.
- Be open to suggestions and willing to try new ideas.
- Be consistent with exercises provided.
- Utilize your support group (family and friends) to help you reach and maintain goals.
- Celebrate your success, no matter how big or small!

What do patients have to say about SLP services?

“Half of the battle is to have good healthcare provided by excellent staff who can try to emphasize what the patient is experiencing. Thank you for all your help towards my goals.”

Event Highlight: Memory Café

We invite you to check out the Memory Café! The Memory Café is for those living with dementia and their care partners. The Memory Café provides an opportunity to meet others, socialize, learn about resources and have fun!



The Cafés are held twice-monthly from 1 to 3 p.m. on the second and fourth Wednesdays at the DeWolf Innovation Center (9000 C Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids). Co-facilitators are Sam McCord and Susie Winkowski. Refreshments are always included. Please register by contacting the Family Caregivers Center if you plan to join us. We hope to see you there!



“Volunteer Spotlights” highlight our wonderful volunteers who give of their time and talents. If you’re interested in becoming a volunteer or want to learn more, please call the Center at (319) 221-8866 or email fcgc@mercyare.org.

I grew up in Omaha, Neb., and attended North High School and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I retired in 2008 from a 28-year career with Coe College, where I was Director of Production, Layout and Graphic Design. Just before retiring, I began a five-year program in spiritual formation and spiritual direction. I enjoy reading, particularly books on spirituality, with a good mystery thrown in now and then.



Carole Butz

I was a long-distance caregiver for my mother who lived in Omaha. When she could no longer live in her apartment, we moved her into assisted living. After about two years, she required more care and I moved her to a long-term facility here in Cedar Rapids, where she

died in 2000. Shortly after her death, my husband, Mick, began showing signs of memory loss. In 2004, he was diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment; in 2007, they called it Alzheimer’s and, in 2012, he entered care. He died in 2019 of end-stage Alzheimer’s.

As a volunteer with the Family Caregivers Center, I serve on the Planning Team (Kitchen Cabinet); the Rural Outreach team; and, together with Laura Sagers, co-facilitate the Women’s Caregiver Coffee and the Wednesday Coffee. I decided to become a volunteer because I was so gifted throughout Mick’s illness with people along the way who supported us, helped us make decisions and provided a listening ear. Giving back could be my only response to such generosity.

I’m so looking forward to seeing what’s next for the Family Caregiver Center and the DeWolf Innovation Center. As we launch new programs in the areas of dementia and aging, the possibilities are exciting!

My advice to caregivers is to find ways to live life in the midst of caregiving, take care of your health and give yourself lots of grace. No one does caregiving perfectly; settle for “best” over “right” and learn to live with ambiguity.



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

Communication is Key

Communication is one of the keys in any relationship. This is especially true when caring for someone’s needs and wellbeing. For those who do not know, I was a caregiver for my grandmother who lived with dementia. My mom is one of five children with varying thoughts and perspectives about the best care for my grandma. The thoughts and opinions of my aunts and uncles were valid and usually thoughtful, but none were dealing with the day-to-day caregiving. My parents, two teenage brothers and I were the local family supporting my grandpa in physically caring for my grandma. My aunts and uncles didn’t know what was happening day to day to fully understand the complexities of caregiving. What ultimately helped was increasing communication.

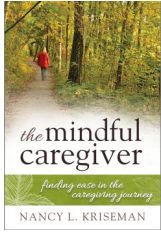
My mom and grandpa were overwhelmed and became easily frustrated when receiving unsolicited opinions. My grandpa also had a difficult time freely talking on the phone in front of my grandma, so phone calls were not very informative. One of my aunts stepped in as the family communicator. She would talk with my mom and grandpa and then send text updates to the other siblings. This helped everyone have a better understanding of the reality of the situation so fewer assumptions and misunderstandings occurred.

In families or teams with multiple people caring for a loved one or person living with a chronic condition, each person will likely have a different role. Someone may help with transportation to appointments; someone else may pay the bills; another may be the communicator, like my aunt. With multiple team members, it is important to keep communication open with those involved so all are informed. A family or team meeting can be helpful to bring all voices to the table to share information and make sure all are on the same page. *(The Center would be happy to facilitate a family meeting if that would be helpful in your caregiving situation.)*

My dad is now assisting in caring for his mom, who is living with Parkinson’s. While she is very independent, her needs are changing and will likely need additional support in the future. My dad is one of seven children. Once again, communication will be key in making sure my grandma has all her needs met moving forward.

– Abby Weirather, Center Manager

Book Review



“The Mindful Caregiver: Finding Ease in the Caregiver Journey” By Nancy L. Kriseman

Caregiving can be enormously challenging, terrifically rewarding and potentially draining. Caregivers often wonder how they will navigate the tumultuous waters of caregiving and not lose themselves completely. The Mindful Caregiver highlights two major approaches to help transform the journey – adopting a practice of mindfulness, which helps caregivers become more self-aware and fully present with the person with whom they are caring; and honoring “the spirit-side” of caregiving, which offers new ways of connecting to one another. These approaches consider not just the needs of the care recipient, but also the needs of the caregiver and other people in his or her life.

Remembering to care for oneself when someone else is in great need can be difficult. But, with the suggestions and tips in this book, any caregiver can cultivate routines and practices that benefit everyone. Solutions that caregivers can use in their day-to-day routines are provided so caregivers who use them can feel more empowered and hopeful. Using real stories throughout, Nancy Kriseman offers self-care exercises and addresses a wide variety of subjects, such as setting realistic expectations, making the best possible decisions, advocating effectively, and evaluating available resources and services. “The Mindful Caregiver” provides inspiration, encouragement and guidance for finding ease in the caregiving journey. By emphasizing both mindfulness and the spiritual dimension, caregivers can reap the gifts of caregiving, appreciate the special moments and find strength during the challenging times.

One-on-One Meetings

Individual meetings with a 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 connections to community and Center resources. To request a one-on-one meeting, please call the Center at (319) 221-8866 or email fccg@mercyare.org.

Resource Review

Moving & Downsizing

Many find spring to be a time to deep clean, downsize or declutter their homes. It may also be a time when you are considering a move. If you’re feeling overwhelmed by knowing how to get organized, sort, downsize or determine what’s moving with you, we are fortunate to have certified local resources that can help. See below for a list of moving and downsizing resources, and let us know if you have any questions!



Caring Transitions

<https://www.caringtransitionscric.com/>
(319) 774-2980

Designing Moves LLC

<https://www.designingmoves.net/>
(319) 377-6891

One Place – Organize Move Consign

www.oneplaceteam.com
(319) 364-1107

(Includes Get Organized!; Heck’s Transfer & Moving; and It’s Simply Serendipity Furniture & Décor Consignment)

SmoothMoves by Gina

<https://www.smoothmovesbygina.com/>
(319) 573-2642



“Take a Moment” Podcast

“Take a Moment” Caregiving Podcast is a podcast with reflections, tips and inspiration for family caregivers. Each episode is three to five minutes long and produced by our very own volunteer Dr. Peg O’Rourke, retired counselor and caregiver to her husband, David.

“Take a Moment” Podcast: [Click here](#) or go to <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1855120/> to listen. Enjoy!

About the Center

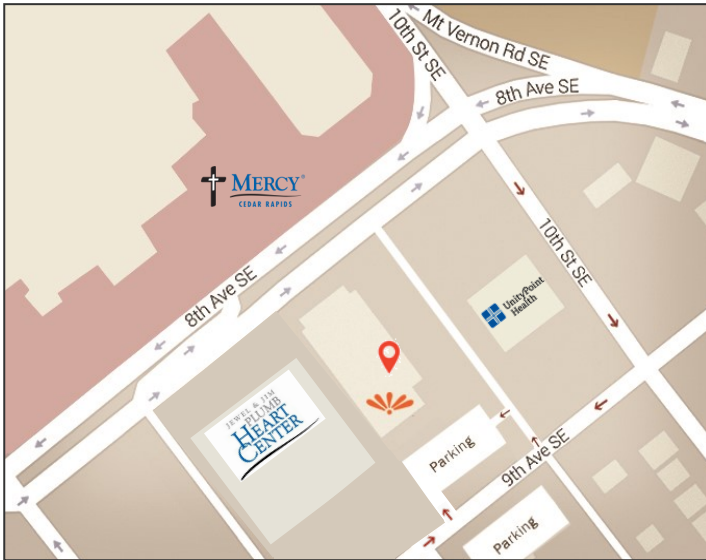
The Family Caregivers Center of Mercy is a resource for family caregivers who are caring for adults living with chronic conditions, such as dementia; Parkinson's; cancer; diabetes; heart and lung diseases; arthritis; COPD; etc.

Caregivers may often feel alone, overwhelmed and 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 and 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.

Family Caregivers Center at the...

Downtown - 901 Building

901 8th Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401



Directions: Take Eighth Avenue and turn onto Seventh Street. Travel one block south, then turn left onto Ninth Avenue. Travel 1.5 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.

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...

DeWolf Innovation Center

9000 C Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402



Directions: Take C Avenue 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 & Dementia.

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

Contact Us

(319) 221-8866 | fgc@mercy.org | familycaregiverscenter.org