



CAREGIVERS

VOLUNTEERS ASSISTING THE ELDERLY

Fall 1997

Volume 14, Number 4

Dinner Honors Volunteers

Ninety volunteers and friends of CAREGIVERS gathered at the Poinsettia Pavilion on October 19 to enjoy an evening of friendship, laughter and togetherness.

To honor dedicated volunteers, who donated 47,000 hours of service to the program last year, the Rotary Club of the Ventura Marina contributed a delicious



Sr. Barbara Dugan and Judy Frazier serve punch to the thirsty.

barbecue dinner and The Royal Bakery and Cafe again donated a beautiful sheet cake. Entertainment by the Harmony Channel Barbershop Quartet put a smile on everyone's face and left us all humming. We thank all these wonderful, generous folks, as well as the College Pharmacy for donating a gift and First United Methodist Church for loaning silverware.



Chow hounds prepare to enjoy the BBQ dinner prepared by the Ventura Marina Rotary Club.



CAREGIVERS Board Members Rod Brown (l) and Lylian Pressel chat with Art Zimmer (r).

Don't Let DEPRESSION Get you Down

by Laine Waggoner

If you or someone you love has lost interest in their usual activities, stays gloomy or feels worthless—don't dismiss those feelings as natural signs of growing older.

The problem could be depression, one of the oldest human afflictions.

Millions of the elderly suffer from depression. Some conceal it. Some don't recognize it, and many never seek help. It is not enough to tell them, "Cheer up" or "Snap out of it."

"In our society, we are all depressed," says Karen Florey, a marriage, family and child counselor in Camarillo. "In addition to taking medication under a psychiatrist's supervision, depressed people need therapy to change their damaging thoughts

and behavior. Therapy is helpful with solving things in their lives.

"An additional problem with the elderly is that they are too often isolated. And, they are troubled by all the things they didn't do and now they won't ever have time for them. They are dealing with all kinds of losses. Retirement is also a tremendous loss for those who have defined themselves by their jobs."

The American Psychological Association points out that women are more likely to experience depression than men because women tend to be more passive, dependent, pessimistic or negative in their attitudes. Depression results if they dwell on their bad feelings. Women who have been battered and/or raped may get

depressive symptoms as a result of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or from undiagnosed head injuries from battering.

The APA's Task Force on Women and Depression found that the very "experience of being female in our contemporary culture" causes more women to be truly depressed. This is a result of a variety of biological, social and psychological causes.

Women tend to brood and dwell on their worries or problems. Men have a different coping style. They tend to employ action and mastery strategies which distract them and give them a sense of power and control.

This is why many therapists

Continued on page 2

prescribe exercise, especially aerobic exercise, as a partial antidote for depression. It gives women an increased sense of self-discipline, control and mastery.

Depression is not a sign of weakness. The National Foundation for Depressive Illness says it is the most common and destructive of illnesses prevalent in the U.S. today. In addition to major depression, people can suffer from mood swings or manic depressive illness. It is twice as common among women, yet more men mask depression with alcohol or drugs.

We're talking millions of people who are affected when you multiply each of the people stricken with depressive illness by all their family, friends, employees and associates who will also be adversely affected.

Depression is often a medical problem brought on by a biochemical imbalance. This can be triggered by a hereditary predisposition toward depressive illness. Or it can be caused by the stress of life events, losses and the emotions that follow them- which suppress the body's immune system. This triggers the bodily

changes that create the mood disorder.

The American Psychological Association says that nearly 80 percent of people with depression fail to recognize it and don't get help for it. Most physicians do not recognize depression in their patients because they don't ask about it and their elderly patients don't volunteer that information.

Studies of elderly people who committed suicide as a result of depression, have shown that 75 percent of them visited a doctor within a week of their deaths. That is so sad, because depression is one of the most

easily-treatable disorders with antidepressant drugs to correct the biochemical imbalance. In addition, many sufferers get further benefit from some kind of counseling or talking therapy.

Another reason for treating depression, especially among men and women over 65, is not just to raise their spirits but to protect them from a variety of diseases. Depression complicates medical risks across the board, according to Dr. Eleanor Simonsick, at the National Institute on Aging.

Recent studies have shown that the risk of stroke is nearly three times higher in the depressed elderly. Other studies have shown

that people with depression did worse in recovering from heart attack, hip fractures and severe infections like pneumonia. They also had more difficulty regaining functions like walking after a variety of diseases.

I have a friend who spent years after her retirement going from doctor to doctor with such complaints as diarrhea, chest discomfort and nausea. All the most sophisticated medical tests couldn't find her problem. Eventually, when she had such hopeless feelings that she couldn't keep her mind off suicide, a psychiatrist recognized that she actually had clinical depression. Now the drug he prescribed has made her well.

The National Institute of Mental Health says that depression in at least 75 percent of older people goes undiagnosed. This is partly because the loved ones and friends of the depressed person often misinterpret the symptoms. They assume that changes in personality, sudden irritability and fault finding, pessimism and little hope for the future are natural signs of aging. They also don't realize that depression in older people is often a side effect of medications, like those for heart disease. When the medication is changed the depression usually lifts.

See page 5 for organizations that can answer your questions about depression.



Common Signs of Depression in the Elderly

If several of these symptoms last more than two weeks, you should ideally, consult a specialist in geriatrics or a psychiatrist after medical causes have been ruled out:

- An empty feeling, continuing sadness and anxiety.
- Tiredness, lack of energy.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities like sex.
- Sleep problems, including waking too early in the morning.

- Crying a lot.
- Problems with eating and weight, like big gains or losses.
- Aches and pains that won't go away.
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions.
- Feelings that the future looks grim.
- Feeling extremely guilty, helpless or worthless.
- Irritability
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or a suicide attempt.

Executive Director's Message



Pat Meredith, Executive Director

Can you answer "yes" to any of the following questions?

1. Have you or your child participated in Scouts, Camp Fire, or a Boys & Girls Club?
2. Have you or anyone in your family been affected by cancer, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, AIDS, mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse, or permanent or temporary disability?
3. Have you had to find assistance for elderly, frail parents or grandparents?
4. Have you ever gone to a YMCA or swimming where a Red Cross-trained lifeguard was on duty?
5. Have you ever been concerned about homelessness, child abuse and neglect or illiteracy?

If you answered "yes" to all or part of any of these questions, your life has been affected by the **United Way**, whether you know it or not.

United Way touches the lives of one out of three Ventura County residents each year. It supports health and social service organizations that enhance our quality of life.

Please keep these services, including CAREGIVERS, working for you by supporting this year's **United Way** campaign. For information and to contribute, call 485-6288.

A client writes:

"I am a very blessed person and always remember what CAREGIVERS did for my husband and now me."

Honor Loved Ones in a Special Way

Here's a neat idea for a birthday, anniversary, or special occasion gift. Honor a special friend or relative and make a real difference in the lives of others by donating in their names to CAREGIVERS. Our honorary gift and memorial program allows you to support our volunteer assistance to the frail, homebound elderly.

Please mail your gift to CAREGIVERS along with a note stating the name of the person who is to be honored or remembered. Or call us and we will send you a donor envelope with all necessary information. Notification of your honorary gift (but not the amount) will be sent to the honoree. The family of the deceased will be sent notification of your memorial gift.

Send gifts to: CAREGIVERS, 261 N. Catalina Street, Ventura, 93001; or call 652-0566.

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Call Pat Meredith at
652-0566 for information.

*Have you remembered
CAREGIVERS
in your will?*

YOUR DONATIONS MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO GIVE A HELPING HAND TO THOSE WHO NEED IT. THANK YOU! (July – September, 1997)

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IN MEMORY OF...
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 Juanita Misbeek's birthday
 by Kathy Murphy
 Cheryl Scott
 by Mildred Howard
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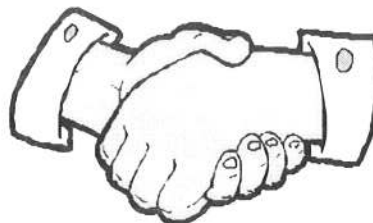
We are able to provide this vital help to the frail elderly in Ventura County only because of the generosity of people like you. Contributions, gifts to our Endowment Fund, memorial gifts, and gifts in honor of a special person or occasion may be sent to our Ventura office, and every gift will be promptly acknowledged. All donations are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to CAREGIVERS. Call us at 652-0566 for more information.

For Your Information

A Parkinson's Disease center has opened at St. John's Hospital, Oxnard. Contact Susan Kline at 988-2615 for information on services available.

Safe Return is a nationwide community-based identification system designed to quickly return lost memory-impaired individuals to safety. For information, call the Alzheimer's Association at 485-5597.

Special Thanks to Special People



...to Geri Yokum, for almost singlehandedly organizing and setting up our rummage sale

...to rummage sale volunteers: Keith York, Barbara Dugan, James Boatner, Senora Alexander, Lylian Pressel, Jesse Dunlap, Bertie Gaertner, Norma Fulkerson, Sr. Sharon Margaret Ninteman, Chuck Thomas, Maria Ridge, Ed Abato, Luther Tolo, Carol Basralian, Ellen Pearson, and Cecilia Ollivares.

Thank you all for making our sale successful.



Season's Greetings and Very Best Wishes to All from the CAREGIVERS staff: Pat, Carol, Cecilia, and Ellen

New Staff Member – Ellen Pearson



If you call the office, you may very likely hear my voice. I started working at CAREGIVERS as the administrative assistant/bookkeeper in mid-August. I am glad to be here.

My husband, Rick, and two children, Jonathan and Sonja, and I live in Oak View. I grew up in Wisconsin and moved to California with my family in 1970. What a good decision that was, because soon afterward I met Rick and we married in 1973. Both of us graduated in 1979, Rick from the Claremont School of Theology and I from Cal Poly, Pomona.

I enjoy reading and gardening and soon I hope to get back to bicycling to and from work. I like to be with my family and to be involved in church.

For the last four years I have worked as church secretary at College United Methodist Church. This job was a lot like being at CAREGIVERS, a nice place to be. I enjoy keeping things organized and working on the computer, and I like to talk with you when you call the office or stop by. I think CAREGIVERS is a wonderful organization which helps many people in significant ways. I look forward to being involved and getting to know you better.

CAREGIVERS Benefactors

(Gifts of \$1000 or more)

Anonymous senior resident of
Ventura

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A client writes:

"I want to thank you so much for sending me a very nice lady to take me shopping. She has been my right hand in many ways."

Desperately Seeking Volunteers

Do you want to...

- Give service to your community?
- Have a rewarding volunteer experience?
- Use your talents and abilities to help an elderly person?
- Make new friends?
- Set your own hours?
- Work independently but with plenty of support?
- Be challenged and appreciated?
- Feel good about yourself?

Call Carol at 652-0566 to find out about volunteer opportunities with CAREGIVERS. We need you!

Sources for Depression Information

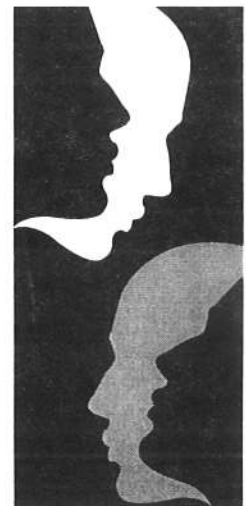
Help for depression is available from a wide assortment of specializing physicians, health maintenance organizations, community mental health centers and mental health professionals. There is also loads of information on depression available by phoning such organizations as:

National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association 1-800-826-3632

National Foundation for Depressive Illness 1-800-248-4344

Ventura County Alliance for the Mentally Ill 486-1382

Ventura County Mental Health Information 652-6725 and its 24-hour emergency service 652-6727



Coming Events:

Board Meetings
Thursdays 7:00 A.M.
Nov. 20, Dec. 18

Christmas Holiday

Dec. 23 - 26
Office closed

Golf Tournament!

Mon. March 16
Buena Ventura Golf Course
Lunch at the Wedgewood

Thanksgiving Holiday

Nov. 27 - 28
Office closed

CAREGIVERS

VOLUNTEERS ASSISTING THE ELDERLY

261 North Catalina Street
Ventura, CA 93001

Address Correction Requested.



United Way
of Ventura County

CAREGIVERS' MISSION - To provide a reliable personal relationship between one volunteer and one elder in need of assistance. Without the kind of services we offer, frail elders may find themselves living in unfamiliar, impersonal institutions, with a debilitating sense of having lost both independence and dignity. By matching volunteers with elders who need assistance, CAREGIVERS permits many of them to remain in the familiar and cherished surroundings of their own homes.

CAREGIVERS, an interfaith effort, is sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and is grateful for the financial assistance of Trinity Lutheran Church, Ventura; First United Methodist Church, Ventura; Ventura County Church of Religious Science, Ventura; Sisters of the Holy Cross; National Council of Jewish Women; First United Methodist Women; and St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Santa Paula.

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