



CAREGIVERS

VOLUNTEERS ASSISTING THE ELDERLY

Summer 1997 Volume 14, Number 3

The Pursuit of Happiness = The Pursuit of Health

by Laine Waggoner

Happiness is free and has no side effects. This is what we're beginning to hear from medical researchers and doctors.

For too long, conventional 20th century medicine has been hung-up on the use of powerful drugs and life saving surgeries to the exclusion of anything else.

"Doctors today are trained to use drugs and surgery," says internist Dean Ornish of the University of California, San Francisco, which pioneered research into how diet, exercise and meditation can reverse heart disease. He paraphrases sociologist Abraham Maslow, "If all you're trained to use is a hammer, the whole world looks like a nail."

But, it is becoming increasingly obvious to the medical community that there is a mind-body connection. Laughter, positive thinking, stress reduction and a healthy attitude have been proven to favorably affect our physical health and make us better able to live with many chronic problems related to aging and lifestyle choices such as arthritis, hypertension, ulcers, osteoporosis and back pain.

The mind can play a large role in these types of ailments- both in causing them and in easing the pain they produce.

Researchers at UCLA's Norman Cousins Program in Psychoneuroimmunology have

been exploring how the brain sends messages to the immune system in order to assess the mind's influence on health, aging and the course of a variety of diseases.

Margaret Kemeny, the program's director, believes that eventually the treatment of many



more illnesses might incorporate both medical and psychological care.

It is already widely accepted that "type A" personality traits (hard-driving and stress-filled workaholic-types) are risk factors in cardiovascular disease. Kemeny says that research still has a long way to go but, in the meantime, she recommends limiting aggression, avoiding circumstances which can lead to depression, enhancing emotional bonds with others and thinking positively.

Part of the mind's effect on health is direct and conscious,

according to surgeon Bernie Siegel, M.D., who has become a popular author of books on healing.

"The extent to which we love ourselves determines whether we eat right, get enough sleep, smoke, wear seat belts, exercise, and so on," he writes. He also believes that feelings of hope and love are powerful healers and, conversely, stress, low-self-esteem and a sense of helplessness weaken the body's defenses and leave them vulnerable to disease.

Dr. Siegel and many other writers recommend a variety of techniques for achieving good mental health such as visualization, hypnosis and hearty laughter. They believe we should seek out the things that make us happy and bring a smile to our faces - work we enjoy, our favorite hobbies, movies, music and upbeat friends.

Don't think that social isolation can make a person stress-free. Studies show that there is a greater incidence of accidents, suicide, health and psychiatric problems among people who are without the connectedness of family, friends, plants, pets or other social connections. That's why CAREGIVERS plays an especially important role in the lives of the frail elderly who live alone.

Research has also shown that people who take personal responsibility for their health and who are able to make decisions for

Continued on page 2

JOYCE KORTAS- Helping Hands and a Caring Heart

by Carol Basralian

Joyce read about CAREGIVERS in her church bulletin three years ago. Recently retired from the Southern California Gas Company, she was motivated to volunteer by a strong need to do something positive for her community.

About the same time, Jennie Boyle joined our program. Because her peripheral vision was poor and she could no longer drive, Jennie needed someone to take her shopping and to be there with a reassuring arm on which to lean, if she needed it.

Jennie followed her only son to Ventura County in 1976 after being widowed. She has fond memories of growing up with



Jennie Boyle and volunteer Joyce Kortas look for just the right potted plant.

nine sisters and one brother and working on the 640-acre family farm. Jennie is proud of her roots. Her parents emigrated from Norway to North Dakota in the 1890s.

We were lucky that in Joyce we

found that special person to fill Jennie's needs.

You may see Joyce and Jennie shopping almost anywhere in the city. They love to go to Green Thumb, Longs Drugs and, of course, the grocery stores. "It's very hard giving up your car," says 86-year-old Jennie. "You think, 'there goes my independence.' But with Joyce just a phone call away, I don't ever feel isolated. She's a wonderful lady and a special friend."

Joyce enthusiastically adds, "I'm so lucky! We ARE good friends. I consider Jennie to be part of my family."

CAREGIVERS thanks Joyce for her helping hands and caring heart.

HAPPINESS—Continued from page 1

themselves have the upper hand in fighting illness.

Exercise can dramatically improve your self-image. It can also stimulate your brain and can serve to soothe it.

Happiness is an attitude, not a condition, writes Adair Lara in "Glamour" magazine. It can be found in the most mundane of everyday activities. She believes that happiness comes from a choice to fall in love with the life you are living now.

But, hold on, there seems to be a limit to how happy one can be.

Some scientists have been suggesting that our genes determine how happy we will be, not outside reality. They say that no

matter how tragic or comic our lives may be, people appear to return to whatever happiness level is pre-set in their constitution.

There is wide support for this notion among scientists. The New York Times News Service reported in July 1996 on the idea of a genetically determined mood level or a biological set-point which is responsible for our sense of well-being.

This idea, similar to the concept of a set-point in weight control, was put forth by University of Illinois psychologists, Dr. Edward Diener

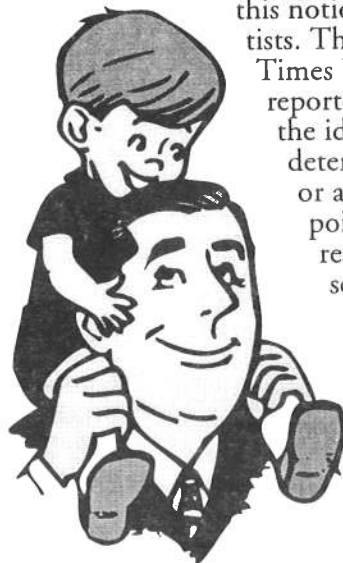
and his wife Dr. Carol Diener. They say that this explains why studies show that lottery winners are no happier a year after they

won than they were before.

"About half your sense of well-being is determined by your set-point," said Dr. David T. Lykken, a behavioral geneticist at the University of Minnesota who studies pairs of twins.

The Dieners say that with happy events like being promoted or sad events like losing a lover, "most of the effect on people's mood is gone by three months, and there's not a trace by six months."

So, I guess we have to keep on working on accepting our lives with happiness in order to promote good health.



A client writes:

"He has helped us in more ways than we can possibly put on paper. First and foremost he has become a dear friend, understanding, patient and non-judgmental."

Executive Director's Message



Pat Meredith, Executive Director

It's the beginning of a new fiscal year and we are all looking forward to a year of continuing progress in our service to frail, homebound seniors. Thanks to all who made it possible for us to assist more than 400 people during the past year. Besides those who are matched with an elder, our volunteers include emergency drivers, board members, office helpers and those who help with our bulk mailings. Because of all these dedicated people, we are able to keep our paid staff to a minimum and operate the program on a very lean budget.

In the best of all possible worlds, we'd have a money tree growing in our garden and wouldn't continually have to beg for funds. Therefore, we are so grateful to the people and organizations who believe in our mission enough to dig into their pockets and support it with their hard-earned cash. Thanks are also due to individual donors, foundations, churches, businesses, and to United Way for providing the funding that keeps our doors open.

Our population of elderly people is growing. As the years pass, we'll receive more and more requests for assistance, requests that we'll be able to respond to only with your support. Please keep CAREGIVERS in mind as you make your decisions about how to support the community you live in. Help us to continue to provide this unique and greatly needed service in the years to come.

Help Wanted!

Can you give two or more hours per week to help an elder in need? We have about 25 seniors now on our waiting list for service. Their needs range from transportation to the doctor, to help with writing out checks to pay monthly bills, to minor household tasks such as changing a light bulb. Volunteers are never put in a position beyond their capabilities, nor are they ever asked to do any kind of nursing care. You decide what tasks you can help with and how much time you can spend each week. You can help someone improve his or her quality of life, and you can make a wonderful new friend in the process. Please call 652-0566 for more information.

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Call Pat Meredith at
652-0566 for information.

For Your Information

Chronic Pain Support Group meets from noon till 2 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month at 1st United Methodist Church, 1338 E. Santa Clara St., Ventura. Free. Call DJ at 643-7760 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! (May and June, 1997)

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by Virginia Camarillo

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.

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(Gifts of \$1000 or more)**

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**Special Thanks to
Special People**



...to Joyce Cantrell, for organizing all our bulk mailings.
...to Bertie Gaertner, for helping in the office every Wednesday.
...to Keith York, for being willing and able to fix absolutely anything.
...to Sherry Lyons, for preparing our monthly financial statements.
...to Jim Garfield, Cal West Real Estate, for donating office space in Santa Paula.

A DAY IN THE LIFE- Carol in the Driver's Seat

The day started like any other. Then I received a distressing phone call that one of our emergency drivers was ill. I had no other driver to take her place. So that, literally, put me in the driver's seat.

I knew that Mary (not her real name) was having surgery the following week, so her medical appointments were very important and could not be rescheduled.

I left the office at 1:45 p.m. to pick Mary up at her apartment and take her to her first appointment at a local blood services office. This went very well and we

were out in about an hour. "Not bad," I thought to myself.

Her next appointment, however, was a nightmare because by then Mary was complaining that her leg was hurting. Her appointment was for 3:40 p.m. and we had to wait and wait.

I wondered if anyone cared



that she was in pain while I read and reread the L.A. Times and went out for a brief snack while Mary was waiting in an inner room. When Mary finally came out at almost 6 p.m., we gratefully whisked back to her apartment.

We at CAREGIVERS know that the above scenario is not unique. It takes a very special person to do what you volunteers do. We think those of you who regularly drive our elders to their doctors, clinics, hospitals and stores are really exceptional. Thank you for your incredible compassion and patience.

Carol Basralian

RuMmAge Sale

Start saving your usable discards now! Our fourth annual rummage sale will take place on September 26 and 27. We would like to have your sellable housewares, bric-a-brac, pictures, small appliances, toys, books, etc. We can't take clothing, large furniture, large appliances, or things that don't work.

Please bring your items to the CAREGIVERS office by September 19th. A receipt will be provided upon request.

A client writes:

"Thank you for sending our volunteer to us. He is just right. We never fail to thank Jesus for him and ask blessings on him, his family and your organization."

1998 Golf Tournament Help Wanted!

CAREGIVERS' Golf Tournament Committee needs you! Join the fun and excitement of planning the 6th Annual "Wearin' o' the Green" Golf Tournament coming up next March 20, 1998. Call Pat at 652-0566 to find out how you can help.



Coming Events:

Annual Rummage Sale
 Sept. 26 & 27, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
 at CAREGIVERS

Board Meetings
 Thursdays 7:00 a.m.
 Aug. 21, Sept. 18, Oct. 16

Volunteer Recognition Dinner
 Poinsetta Pavilion
 Sun., Oct. 19, 4 p.m.

CAREGIVERS

VOLUNTEERS ASSISTING THE ELDERLY

261 North Catalina Street
 Ventura, CA 93001
 Address Correction Requested.



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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