

CAREConnections

Information and Inspiration for Caregivers

A Publication of Boulder County Area Agency on Aging

Nov/Dec 2018

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Dear Caregiver,

Did you know that November is National Family Caregiver Month? Family caregivers provide an invaluable community service, and one that is deeply personal, by giving their energy, resources, and heart, for the benefit of a loved one. I cannot think of a role that is more deserving, nor in need, of recognition. Whether you are newly seeing yourself as a caregiver or have been caring for quite some time, we know that the caregiver's experience, and frame of reference, is varied. Along with where you are on your timeline of caregiving (often unknown), you also have other identities and life situations that impact your path. In this issue, we chose to recruit caregivers with a diversity of identity and situation, and hear some of your voices directly. We spoke to people with varied culture of origin, gender, sexual orientation, region, and more. Some were interviewed by members of our Editorial Advisory Board, others by staff at the Area Agency on Aging, but all were guided by the same core questions. In addition to hearing their overall story, we wanted to know about (1) the greatest gift of caregiving, (2) the greatest challenge of caregiving, (3) what resources or learning opportunities supported them, (4) what they wish they knew before, (5) what insights they wish to share with other caregivers, and (6) how their path has been impacted by caregiving. May their willingness to share be of service to you...and thank you for the gifts which *you* share everyday.

The Editors

A Moment with a Latino Family

Roberto Rivero spoke with Care Connections in August of 2018 about caring for his mother, when he was first hired by Boulder County Area Agency on Aging (AAA), in the Spring of 2015. Mr. Rivero is a Spanish speaking Options Counselor with ADRC – Aging and Disability Resources for Colorado, as part of Boulder County Community Services.

Care Connections: I understand you recently lost your mother. Can you tell us something about her?





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Roberto: My mother lived in Mexico City, in a beautiful colonial area in the Southern part of the city. It was safe and was a wonderful community for her. She knew everybody. She walked to the market and spoke with everyone: the vegetable man, the flower seller, the chicken man. "Miss Gloria, how goes it?" "Once in a while someone would say "Gloria, how are your cats?" She was elegant, proper, and funny. She would proudly wear indigenous textiles and was a strong advocate for women and indigenous groups. She worked for several international bodies including UNICEF, and also was employed by five embassies throughout her employment years.

CC: It sounds like a wonderful support system.

Roberto: Yes it was, until she began showing signs of dementia, possibly Alzheimer's Disease, and could no longer manage. She visited each of her four sons, for fairly long periods of time, in rotation. She liked being in Colorado and the mountains, she was a pioneer for mountain sports in Mexico. She had four children, I was living here in Boulder. She always recognized her four sons throughout the disease and she never lost track of us.

CC: Then what happened?

Roberto: Mom was in Boulder, where she was a stranger. She lost her support system. Her connections. She lived with me and my family, my wife and two teenaged kids.

CC: How did that go?

Roberto: It was difficult for all of us. Mom would never eat what my wife cooked. I had to come home from work to offer her food. My wife was caring but mom didn't accept her help as part of the family. She would hold her grandchildren's hands but not my wife's. My wife's feelings were probably hurt.

CC: Sounds painful.

Roberto: My mother never accepted my wife's help.

CC: Did she relate to anyone besides you, her son?

Roberto: Our older neighbors talked to her; they discussed cats, my mother had four.

CC: Always a good topic.

(continued on page 4)

Dear Reader,

Once a year, we reach out to all of you on the other end of this labor of love that is the creation of *Care Connections*, about the opportunity to contribute toward the services we provide. We so value being able to provide information, guidance, resources... and hopefully inspiration for caregivers. And it is our deepest intention to bring forth articles that speak to you in a meaningful way.

A key piece of our funding comes through contributions. Because it is important to us that cost not interfere with your accessing information, Care Connections is always available regardless of ability to pay a subscription fee. At the same time, if you find it supportive and feel you can contribute towards our costs, this will be gratefully received. **To provide a guideline, we recommend a donation of \$25, but the amount that is right for you, is perfect.**

Sending out Care Connections is one of the many services we provided to caregivers through the Area Agency on Aging. We provide free caregiver training classes, the Respite and Companion Volunteer Program, respite resources, the annual Caregiving Symposium, Information and Referral Services, and much more. Your contribution helps us to continue to provide services, which those in the noble position of providing care to an older adult deserve.

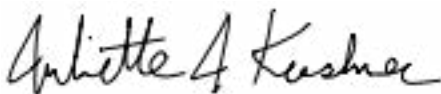
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Sincerely,



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Caregiver Initiative Coordinator

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A MOMENT WITH A LATINO FAMILY

(continued from page 2)

Roberto: Mom always thought she was in Mexico City. She'd take her purse, leave my house, and "head off to the subway to go home." My kids got used to follow their grandmother, they'd phone me up and say "come pick her up." I'd come and say, "Mom, come home with me" to which she would reply "So good to find you!"

Then, I would say "Let's go get something to eat." She would reply: "Robertito, it's so good to see you! "

CC: That's a sweet story, but also painful.

Roberto: She retained her dignity but she knew something wasn't right, each of her sons was educated but we didn't know what to do. We loved her but we didn't know about Alzheimer's. We didn't know how to care for her and her deteriorating condition.

CC: When she lived with you here, did you hire help?

Roberto: No, it was too expensive. We did everything, I had to shower her. It is not common for a male to shower a woman, culturally speaking. It was difficult for me to do. And, as I've told you, she wouldn't let my wife help her. We are immigrants to this country, like most people. We, Latinos, do not send our elderly to facilities, we rely on family.

CC: But Roberto, your job is with Boulder County AAA as a Bilingual Options Counselor. I understand that you help people in that community find resources such as meals on wheels, day care, and facilities in which older adults may be cared for.

Roberto: We try our best to keep people at home, always respecting their wishes, and making sure that they are to have their dignity and are safe and comfortable.

CC: So now you use your personal experience to help others. Has that happened?

Roberto: Yes, of course. I can, from personal experience, say to my clients "Don't be scared to access services. Don't be hesitant."

CC: Given what you just said, can you tell me how your mother died? Did she die in your home?

Roberto: She passed in her own home in Mexico City. She was in Colorado but did not want to be here. She missed her community, her food, and her culture. My brothers and I decided to fly her back to Mexico City to her house. Her place. We hired a woman to help clean, cook, and sit with her.

CC: So she was able to end her life in her own house, in her own country.

Roberto: Yes. This was a good decision.

CC: Thank you for talking to us. Is there anything about this experience you would like to convey to our readers? You have spoken a great deal about the cultural differences between the United States, your home country, and other countries.

Roberto: Yes. I'd like to say that if you are dealing with an older adult, try to find support. Gather resources that may help and benefit your family. Professional staff and information are readily available. Visit Boulder County AAA for a short, free consultation on the options/resources you and your family may be able to use for your loved ones.

This interview was conducted by Lynn Malkinson, a member of the Care Connections Editorial Advisory Committee.



TALES OF A MOUNTAIN CAREGIVER

Liz and her father both live in Nederland. Here she shares her experience of caregiving and community in the mountains.

Please tell us your story:

In 1999, I moved back to Phoenix after graduate school. We moved to the neighborhood where my dad lived, and I had grown up as a child. Phoenix had changed into a big city. My dad experienced many challenges and some dangerous situations as a blind person. When my family moved back to Colorado, a year or so later, Dad decided to join us, “I miss your cooking!” We bought the land and my (then) husband, John, and his partner, built my dad’s log home. We knew that Dad would make friends and be welcomed into the Nederland community.

Over the years, Dad has stayed independent and happy with the support and caring from community members. Being able to walk to stores, church, and restaurants in Nederland was key. He could do everything for himself. The Guide Dog School for the Blind did a great job of helping him transition to a community with mountain conditions and no sidewalks.

Now Dad needs more support from my sister and myself due to growing mobility challenges. He allows someone to come in and clean his house every two weeks, but has refused any more formal help. He cooks, enjoys the “Duffer’s Diner” (Nederland Area Seniors Lunch) and when he can, and weather permits, he walks to the Pioneer Inn for Friday night friends. He has a ride to church from a community member.

What has been the greatest gift of caregiving for you?

After my dad moved, my sister and family

joined the rest of us in Colorado. Dianne and I work together as a team to help my dad. We decided long ago that Dad’s independence came first. We stand by that decision, despite the fact that sometimes his safety is secondary.

What has been the greatest challenge of caregiving for you?

With all the love and respect in my heart for my dad, sadly he is our biggest caregiving challenge. His determination to weld, hike Grand Canyon, dive with search and rescue in Maricopa county, hunt (on and on, so many exciting challenges) as a blind man can work against us. He sidesteps health questions with long stories and is slow to make changes that improve his safety.

Boulder County has a lot to offer for seniors, unfortunately most of the supports are on the flats. When the time comes for the use of caregivers, where will we find them? The decision about how and when to apply formal support is also a challenge. We go day to day and week to week with a ‘so far, so good’ attitude.

What has been a valuable resource and/or learning opportunity for you?

My sister and I have skills. She is an ICU nurse and I am a speech therapist. Her medical knowledge and expertise keeps Dad at home versus having to go to many health-related visits in town. I assess safety, mobility, and cognition, and have many years of experience caring for elders in the skilled nursing and outpatient setting.

The design of Dad’s home, with an apartment underneath is important. This gives us options for caregivers, keeping him in his home, and meeting challenges created by changing mobility.

The Nederland community is a huge resource for us. Dr. Camarata gives us extra time to listen to my concerns for Dad’s health with a few off-topic stories from Dad. He understands and demon-



strates respect for Dad's autonomy. One community member who works at the B&F would leave the store and give my dad a ride home with his groceries when the weather turned rough. Another from Ace Hardware, my dad's friend, and painter of all his welded art, looks for my dad's garbage can after the wind has blown it down the street.

There's Dad's neighbor who picked him up out of a snow bank a few November's ago, the roommate who snow blows the driveway, the congregation at the Presbyterian Church, and Mayor Chris who rescued my dad from a vagrant who wanted his pit bull to fight my dad's guide dog. There are endless examples. You are not going to get this from a big city community on the flats.

What did you find out after the fact that you wish you knew before?

There are very few formal resources for elders in the mountains.

Do you have insights to share with other care givers?

Go to the Caregiving Symposium and Senior Law Day! Caregivers need to know when to take a break – it's easy to overestimate your endurance and underestimate your need for self-care when caring for an aging loved one.

How has your path been impacted by being a mountain family caregiver?

I'm really grateful that after my dad moved here, my sister moved here too. This means that my whole family is close to me. It's a huge help that we're working together on this project. I'm committed to living here. He's not going anywhere, and I'm not either. This is it. It's been important for me to work four ten-hour shifts and have time to chase kids or help Grandpa.

How can we get better at organizing and being aware collectively about the informal supports that are in the mountains? Should there be a care-

giver support group? Listserv-Mountain caregivers-who live up here or in the flats? Remote meet-ups? Via internet? Even having my sister close by, it's still overwhelming and challenging!

This interview was conducted by Colleen Sinclair, an Options Counselor for Boulder County Area Agency on Aging, covering rural, mountain, and unincorporated areas.

HEARING FROM A LONG-DISTANCE CAREGIVER

Susan shared her story of long-distance caregiving for her dad, over seven years- before he moved to the Boulder area to be near her. He died four years ago.

Please tell us your story:

I was pulled into caregiving for my dad by an urgent pager call from his neighbor, letting me know my dad was hospitalized. I lived in Colorado and my dad lived alone in Michigan. There were no relatives left in the area who were capable of caring for him, and my mother had died six years earlier. I quickly flew out to be with him, cutting short my 50th birthday vacation in Florida.

My dad had been diagnosed with mild dementia a couple of years earlier. On this fateful trip, I realized that he needed more in-home support, plus it was no longer safe for him to drive. As I had not lived in the area for over 30 years, I was at a loss on what to do for him. I turned to the local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) for help, which was invaluable in offering advice in what was available locally.

Dad was able to live contentedly in his home for another seven years while I did long-distance caregiving with the support of an in-home agency and their steady companions. Kind neighbors also stepped in to keep a watchful eye on him. After



several more hospital stays in Michigan, I made the very difficult decision to move Dad to a memory care assisting living center here in Colorado, where he lived cheerfully for another two years.

What has been the greatest gift of caregiving for you?

I became more patient, kind, flexible, and accepting to what is. I learned to let go, and just love and support my dad the best I could.

What has been the greatest challenge of caregiving for you?

At first, I wanted to believe that my dad would return to being the father that I knew. I looked for ways to “fix” my dad’s dementia, being the trained scientist I am. My desire for perfection gave way to doing the best I could. There were situations that were very stressful for both of us, and I could get so wrapped up in worry that I neglected self-care. I had to learn that I could not control the progression of Alzheimer’s, and that I was a companion on my dad’s journey.

What has been a valuable resource and/or learning opportunity for you?

I turned to the local AAA in Michigan after my dad was released from the hospital. They were helpful - they interviewed my dad, assessed the house, listened to me on what I could, and could not, do. They made recommendations on a wonderful in-home caregiving agency, which provided companionship, meals, driving to appointments, and fun outings. The AAA checked in with my dad during the transition, and advised me when new challenges arose.

I became educated on dementia and caregiving. Especially useful was the annual Boulder County AAA Caregiving Symposium, the classes *Savvy Caregiver* and *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*, and advice from professionals trained in Alzheimer’s care.

What did you find out after the fact that you wish you knew before?

That caregiving is an opportunity to grow personally. And that it deepens the relationship with our loved one. Initially I resisted the role. I was a busy professional, and lived alone, and had little social support. Then as a caregiver I had another time-consuming job. However, the personal expansion and greater love for my dad outweigh the challenges of my nine-year caregiving saga.

Do you have insights to share with other caregivers?

- Each person is unique and will have different needs.
- We don’t know how long the caregiving path will be or what it will look like.
- Learn to go with the flow.
- Cherish the time together.
- Remember to take care of yourself, find activities that nourish you, and do them!
- Reach out to others who can support you- professional staff, friends, family.
- Be gentle with yourself.

How has your path been impacted by being a family caregiver?

I grew personally, becoming more wise, patient, and kind. I changed careers during the time I was caring for my dad, and I believe that caregiving opened me up to asking what was truly important in life- and nudged me to grow. Sharing time with my dad, savoring the moments of laughter, nature’s beauty, reminiscing-this sustained me during times of very stressful challenges, and gives me the memories that have me smile today when I think of them.

This interview was conducted by Jessica O’Leary, a member of the Care Connections Editorial Advisory Committee, gerontologist, instructor of the Savvy Caregiver Course, and Care Coordinator at Halcyon Hospice.



ONE WOMAN'S JOURNEY AS AN LGBTQ CAREGIVER

Judith shared her story of caring for her partner, through health challenges, decline, and at the end of life.

Please tell us your story:

My partner Nancy and I met when I was 54 and she was 50. We knew that we were meant to be together until one of us left this world. The caregiving started years before she was diagnosed with the stage 4 pancreatic cancer which ended her life, because of her failing cognitive abilities—which were the result of multiple head injuries that occurred from the time she was three years old. These included those from her time as a ski racer at the University of Colorado and on the United States ski team.

We had a business together that was built around her. The business began to fail because she couldn't do the work. I was trying to care give the business, and the home, and the deteriorating financial situation. In the end, we lost everything. We lost our home. There were no assets left when it was all said and done. She also injured her back very badly and suffered severe nerve pain down one leg. That took the joy out of life for her.

After losing our home, we were housesitting for friends, and again she couldn't do the work. There was the caregiving of just keeping a roof over our heads.

At each point I didn't know if I had it in me, but I did. Her sister allowed us to live in her rental unit and have hospice there. Her brother came out from California to help take care of her, and the first night he died. Terrible tragedy, especially for Nancy's sister who lost two siblings in that house. Nancy did pass in February of 2015. It was three and a half years ago. It'll always be a part of me.

What has been the greatest gift of caregiving for you?

One was the reception that we received as an unmarried couple. Same-sex marriage wasn't legal until October 2014. By the time it was legal, Nancy wasn't well enough to get married. But without fail, every health care provider, social services, oncology practice, and physical therapy practice absolutely accepted that we were partners. We didn't have to fight that battle, and I do attribute that to Project Visibility, Boulder County Area Agency on Aging's, (AAA's), LGBT older adult awareness and sensitivity training. The huge step forward is to be able to identify who your person is, and then have staff treat them as so. It was a gift just to be seen.

The other gift to me is selfish but I wanted to know that I could go to the end, I thought I'd die first. I did keep my vows, I didn't know if I would chicken out. The gift was that I made it through, handling everything as well as I could. I did the right things, by my own standards. I guess I needed to know that, and now I do.

What has been the greatest challenge of caregiving for you?

As a lesbian couple, living on social security only, which was poverty because most of our prime earning years were when women only made 50 to 60 cents to every dollar made by men. Neither one of us had accumulated earnings to qualify for higher social security. We were living on very little. We had to go to the foodbanks, we ate church cheese, all of this had to be navigated while house-sitting. Being in poverty makes everything harder.

What has been a valuable resource for you?

After we received Nancy's diagnosis and were considering the future of her care, I met and talked with care providers who were so welcom-

(continued on page 9)



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ONE WOMAN'S JOURNEY AS AN LGBTQ CAREGIVER

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ing and caring. The AAA resource book helped us to select services like oncology and hospice. Just knowing that there were quality services for older adults, and advocacy for older queer people like me, was very meaningful and helped me relax.

What was your most memorable learning opportunity?

When I had panic attacks, the emergency room nurse put me in a room by myself so I could cry for hours and she referred me to a program through Boulder Mental Health Partners, called Seniors helping Seniors. I saw a therapist my age for months, who along with my medical practitioner, helped me to understand how panic and anxiety manifested throughout my body. I just didn't know that this knowledge existed. I was very grateful for it being there.

What did you find out after the fact that you wish you knew before?

The care and the stress of the financial situation, loss of a business, loss of a career, was very significant. What I didn't know was that when that care was done, I would have so much more time for myself. I wouldn't have even wanted to think about it, because I would have rather been with her. But that was exactly what I needed. It's taken me years to gain health and resilience. I'm happy, I'm actually happy, enjoying life, and I couldn't have dreamed that. That was hard to envision because I was so worn out.

Is there anything else you wish to share?

I think I was late to getting help for myself as a caregiver. One time, I thought I was dying of a heart attack in the car trying to drive to the emergency room. I couldn't safely drive so I pulled

over and called an ambulance. They told me right away that my heart was fine, and that it could be a panic attack. As a result of that, I got services before she was gone, just by a few weeks.

I didn't know to ask "what support can I get?" I was getting informational support, but not individual support. But the help I really needed was physical. Caregivers need help and support from the beginning. My doctor said your panic attack is grief, which is a medical condition. I had to show up at the emergency room for me to understand that I had a medical condition triggered from the stress and trauma of caregiving for my loved one. In retrospect, I wish the referrals would have been provided sooner. The support helped me cope, helped my sanity.

This interview was conducted by Michael Chifalo, LGBT Program Specialist with Boulder County Area Agency on Aging.

CARING FOR MORE THAN ONE

Jan has been a caregiver to her two adult autistic sons for 50 years and was also a caregiver to her mother for five years. Caring for her sons eventually led her to pursue a doctorate in science and special education and become a college professor. Currently, she is the project manager for a local nonprofit, arranging transportation for those in need.

Please tell us your story:

I have been a caregiver for 50 years. My two sons who are in their 50s have autism and have stayed at home. My mom moved in with us when she began to show early signs of dementia and needed extra physical care for an amputated leg. My husband and I are now aging and my husband has had epilepsy since he was eight years old. He is also suffering from severe side effects from



medications prescribed to him over the years for his epilepsy.

What has been the greatest gift of caregiving for you?

The greatest gift of caregiving for my sons has been that we have a family that stays together, doing things as a family—this is just the way it is. We do also have a daughter with a family of her own. I realized early on that I could be a role model for parents with children with special needs and have often been told over the years that I am such a role model. When my husband and I moved my mother from Indiana to live with us for five years, it was very peaceful to know she was in good hands at the end of her life. It is a gift to know I have made a difference in someone else's life.

What has been the greatest challenge of caregiving for you?

My greatest challenge has been finding caregivers when needed for my sons, especially as they get older, and for my husband. We are fortunate that a woman who was our babysitter 40 years ago has stayed in the community and continued her assistance—she still helps out one night a week and as needed. Imagine! has also helped provide care for my boys. Another challenge has been balancing my career as a professor of education with the needs of my children.

What has been a valuable resource and/or learning opportunity for you?

Imagine! has been an important resource for my sons for many years, providing many services. My husband and I started a bulk mail business for our sons in 1986 and have kept it going. My sons do the bulk mailing with the help of a job coach. Continuing my own education in science and special education was a great personal resource.

When caregiving for my mom, Boulder County's Area Agency on Aging has also been great.

Respite services provided some funds when needed so I could continue my own activities during the day, without worrying about my mother's care. The Caregiver Symposium has been a great resource as is *Care Connections*.

What did you find out after the fact that you wish you knew before?

I learned it's okay to make some sacrifices for your loved ones. When I made the decision to move my mother in with my family, I wasn't sure how it would affect my marriage and my life, but it worked out. My husband and I had been thinking of modifications we could make to our bi-level home to be able to age-in-place, so we just moved ahead with those plans when the decision was made to move my mother to Colorado.

I also wish I would have known that I would grow both spiritually and intellectually, and that I would enjoy serving as a caregiver. Caregiving has been a joy, even though there have been times of drudge, too.

Do you have insights to share with other care givers?

Don't be afraid to help family members. Be enthusiastic—you're more likely to be open to finding more resources. Don't think of caregiving as short-term, but as long-term—it is a new life experience.

How has your path been impacted by being a caregiver for multiple family members?

My career changed—I wasn't planning on getting a doctorate but I had to get more education to help our boys. After I got my doctorate, I was offered a job at the University of Colorado, writing curriculum, so our family moved to Boulder. My knowledge of government agencies has also increased over the years. As of just a few years ago, both my sons are now on Medicaid as my

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COMMUNITY RESOURCES

This column provides information about events, classes, services, and other resources of interest to family caregivers in Boulder County. Please remember that it is each person's right and responsibility to research a service provider before taking action. See "Information and Assistance in Boulder County" on the back page for ways to learn more about these and other resources. (To share information about a resource for family caregivers, please email InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org or call 303-678-6116. The deadline for the January-February 2019 issue is November 15.)

Medicare Open Enrollment Period, the time to review and make changes to Medicare Part D (prescription drug) or Medicare Advantage/Health Plans, is October 15 – December 7. Appointments accepted by reservation with a Boulder County Medicare Counselor for an individual review of your plan at clinics held in local communities. Locations are West Boulder Senior Center, 909 Arapahoe Avenue, Boulder, on October 24, November 7 and 28, all 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (call 303-441-4388 to register); East Boulder Senior Center, 5660 Sioux Drive, Boulder, October 18, November 1, 15, and 29, all 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (call 303-441-4388 to register); Lafayette Senior Center, 103 S. Iowa Avenue, Lafayette, October 19, November 2 and 30, all 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (call 303-661-1492 to register); Longmont Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Avenue, Longmont, on October 22 and 29, November 5, 13, 19, and 26, December 3, all 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (call 303-651-8411 to register); Due to construction, the 2018 Louisville Clinics will be held at Louisville Public Library-Boardroom, 951 Spruce St, Louisville, on November 7, 14,

and 28, all 11 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. (call 303-666-7400 to register); and St. Vrain Community Hub, 515 Coffman Street, Longmont, on December 5, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. (call 303-441-1546 to register). Note: This annual open enrollment period is not for enrolling in Parts A and B or Medigap plans. For more information, call 303-441-1546.

Medicare Counselors with Boulder County Area Agency on Aging hold **Medicare Basics Classes** for anyone wanting to learn more about enrollment, benefits, costs, and choices under Medicare, on Thursdays, November 1 and December 6, 2 – 4 p.m., at East Boulder Senior Center, 5660 Sioux Drive, Boulder (call 303-441-4150 to pre-register); on Mondays, November 27 and December 17, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., at Longmont Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Avenue, Longmont (call 303-651-8411 to pre-register); and Friday November 16, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m., at Lafayette Public Library (call 303-661-1492 to pre-register). There is no charge, but donations are appreciated.

AgeWell – Longmont United Hospital holds will be holding an **Advanced Directives workshop**, about considering and clarifying one's wishes for medical treatment in the event of incapacitation, on Thursday November 8, 9:30 -11 a.m., at the Longmont Senior Center, 910 Longs Peak Avenue, Longmont. Pre-registration is required, at 303-351-8411 (\$5 for residents, \$6 for non-residents).

The Longmont Senior Center is offering **Hospice 101**, looking at the questions: When is it time for Hospice? And how can they help? When you, or a family member, is facing a terminal illness, with Samantha Black from TRU Community Care Hospice. On Thurs-



day, November 8, 1 – 2:30 p.m.; **Deepen Your Understanding of Dementia Stages**, about the common characteristics in each of the three stages of dementia: early, middle and late, and what to expect as dementia progresses, with Kelli Squire, Dementia Support Specialist. On Wednesday, November 28, 9 – 10:30 a.m.; and **The Basics of Alzheimer’s and Dementia offered in Spanish**, Tuesday, December 11, 10 – 11:30 a.m. Contact Monica at the following number to register. Classes are free, but require pre-registration at 303-651-8411.

Alzheimer’s Association of Colorado offers **Understanding Alzheimer’s and Dementia**, Friday, November 2, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Golden West, 1055 Adams Circle, Aspen Room, and Tuesday November 27, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m., Alta Vita Assisted living, 1001 Alta Vita Court, Media/Community Room; **Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behavior/ Special Focus: Helpful Hints for the Holidays**, Wednesday November 28, 6:30 – 8 p.m., Sacred Heart of Mary Church, 6739 S. Boulder Road, St. Bernard Hall, and Tuesday December 11, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Kaiser Permanente 580 Mokawk Dr, Chautauqua Conference Room; **Effective Communication Strategies**, Tuesday November 13, 3 – 4:30 p.m., Lafayette Senior Center, 103 S Iowa Avenue; and **Know the 10 Signs: Early Detection Matters**, Thursday December 6, 5:30 – 7 p.m., Immaculate Conception Church, 715 Cabrini Drive, Lafayette, Nuoci Hall. Pre-registration required for all classes at alz.org/co or 800-272-3900.

The Erie Community Center is offering a **Veterans Day Celebration**, with a catered meal sponsored by Chick-fil-A, ceremony, and a

choral performance by the Erie High School Choir, Monday, November 12, 12 – 1:30 p.m. Past and current members of the military are welcome to wear their uniforms, all ages welcome. This event is free, though pre-registration by November 4 is required. Also offered is an **Alzheimer’s Association Caregiver Support Group**, a safe place for current or former caregivers, family, and friends of persons with dementia to exchange practical tips, talk through issues, develop coping mechanisms, and learn about community resources. On the first Thursday of every month, 4 p.m. Both at the Community Center, 450 Powers Street, Erie. To register for programs, or for more information, call 303-926-2795.

The Conversation Project in Boulder provides free coaching and education for individuals and families who want to talk about future healthcare decisions and end-of-life care. Visit www.theconversationprojectinboulder.org or call 303-442-0436, ext. 133, for more information.

Cultivate (formerly Boulder County CareConnect) provides no-cost services to Boulder County residents age 60 and over. All of the services are provided by volunteers and include escorted rides to and from medical appointments, escorted rides for veterans to VA facilities, grocery shopping and delivery, minor home repairs, yard cleanup, and snow shoveling. For more information, call 303-443-1933 or visit www.cultivate.ngo.

For a complete list of **caregiver support groups** that meet in Boulder County, call 303-678-6116 or email InfoCaregiver@bouldercounty.org.



CARING FOR MORE THAN ONE

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husband and I get older and are planning for the future. Finally, my compassion for those with disabilities has changed for the better.

This interview was conducted by Susan Damon, a member of the Care Connections Editorial Advisory Committee.

BEING A CAREGIVER FROM TWO CULTURES

Care Connections met with Kim, a Singaporean-American woman who navigated care for her husband for three years in 2004.

Care Connections: Can you tell me your story as a caregiver?

Kim: My husband was very ill with endocarditis and he was in his sixties. Out of the four people that were affected at that time, all three died except my husband. So, the frustrations, the fears, the needs and all that, working with the system, a little bit of fighting with the system, are all my experience.

CC: And was he home or in the hospital?

Kim: He was in the hospital, then he was home with visiting nurses, all these issues, a parade of people coming in. Working with the communication, the interactions.

CC: So, what has been the greatest gift of caregiving for you?

Kim: The perspective of life. It gives me a better sense of the sacred.

CC: In what way?

Kim: As we are so involved with the daily grind of keeping things clean, and paying attention to

someone who is extremely needy. Needy beyond the usual daily needs - so much so that it is painful.

CC: When you are caregiving?

Kim: Yes. And you're tired. And you're grumpy and you're not giving your best. The person needs it though, and there's the guilt, and all these things. But then when we realize all this is a form of teaching us, training us, how to accept life and look at the good side. Because if we don't have the bad side, we don't have the good. It's the light and the dark.

CC: Wise perspective.

Kim: Old age! (laughs)

CC: So, what was the greatest challenge when caring for your husband?

Kim: The fear of loss, and the experience of loss. Because ultimately you don't usually end up with a healed person.

CC: What has been a valuable resource or learning opportunity related to caregiving for you?

Kim: I would say that, it probably has to do with the resilience of the human being. That we do recover, if we give ourselves the chance. You know, we can get back on our feet and carry on. I believe that the human spirit has a resilience that is planted in us, and that we can draw on that resilience. I have seen some people who have given care to someone, who don't seem to be able to bounce back though, and I am familiar with Peer Counseling (through Longmont and Boulder Senior Centers) that is wonderful in those cases.

CC: What did you find out after the fact that you wish you knew before?

Kim: I guess while I was undergoing that, I wish I had relied more on my faith. I allowed myself to succumb to the frustrations, and the pain of caring for someone else. Because there is a lot of personal pain in caring for somebody else when you are doing caregiving. You know- you don't feel



yourself, you don't sleep well enough, you don't care for yourself. And that's why it's important to care for yourself.

But it's a very easy statement to make, not easy to do when you're caregiving. You think of yourself last. You almost have no time to think of yourself, sometimes the situation is such that you have to change his bedclothes, you have to feed him, oops you don't have eggs, you have to run out for eggs. You have to do everything, you just don't have time. That's why it's important to learn self-care. What three things must you do for yourself before jumping into the day of caring for someone?

CC: Like putting on your oxygen mask first. You have to put on your own mask before you can help someone else.

Kim: That's a great example. Feed yourself before you feed another. Exercise.

CC: Do you have any further insights you want to share with other caregivers?

Kim: I would say...all these situations will happen to the majority of us. So, the idea is you have to learn to accept that life is not a bed of roses. And if it is, then we have to learn how to handle the thorns. And so, I don't know if its wisdom but think it's a reality that if we live this life and we reap all the good things...we also will have all these other things. And maybe these other things are to help us appreciate the good things. If we don't have the bad things to compare them to, how do we know they are good things?

CC: You brought that up before with the light and the dark -you have to have the negative to appreciate the positive?

Kim: If you are never in the dark, how can you appreciate the light? But it's not something easy to hear when you are in the midst of cleaning someone's incontinence and you just got a new carpet. If you are Miss Perfectionist, it's really impossible. I've been through all that.

CC: Did being a caregiver help you let go of perfectionism - or did you feel like you were a perfectionist before?

Kim: It makes you allow for the negatives, the not so nice, the not so pleasant. I guess for me, I am learning. I'm still learning "this too will pass."

CC: You have this richness to your experience from living in two cultures that not everybody has. How has your path been impacted by being a Singaporean and American Caregiver?

Kim: I think it has given me a depth and a breadth, that if we are limited to one culture and one level of experience- that we don't really have. Because I grew up very, very poor, and I'm not poor now. It has given me an appreciation of life, and people. Acceptance. I've learned that if life gives me something really tough, I need to accept it.

CC: And do you think that feeling is impacted by being from a different culture?

Kim: I'm not sure, but I feel like the Asian culture is a very stoic culture. I'm not saying be hard-hearted. You almost have to use more of your head than your heart. In caregiving situations, if you use your head - go to classes, learn the various techniques of communication, and practice it and not poo-poo it. Use your head, get more people involved, don't feel you can do it all. If you use your heart only, you want to do it all. I think at the same time, that can come off as hard. And we want our caregivers to love us and care for us, but they've got to love us and care for us with their head. If they do it with their heart, they suffer.

CC: Thank you for sharing your story.

This interview was conducted by Juliette Kershner, a member of the Care Connections Editorial Advisory Committee.

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INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE IN BOULDER COUNTY

Within Boulder County, there are several ways to access information and assistance about resources and services for older adults and their family caregivers:

- Check out **Network of Care for Seniors and People with Disabilities**, a comprehensive online service directory, at www.BoulderCountyHelp.org.
- Call the **ADRC Help Line**, at 303-441-1617, and Boulder County Area Agency on Aging staff will respond to your message.
- Call the **resource specialist** in your community (numbers below). Services vary by community but include identifying needs, exploring options, finding solutions, and providing in-depth assistance.

Allenspark area	303-747-2592
City of Boulder	303-441-4388/303-413-7494 (bilingüe)
City of Lafayette	303-661-1499
City of Longmont	303-774-4372/303-651-8716 (bilingüe)
City of Louisville	303-335-4919
Erie	303-926-2795
Lyons area	303-823-9016
Nederland area	303-258-3068
Niwot area	303-441-1617
Superior	303-441-1617

