

OPINION

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Caregivers Need Our Support

More family members are caring for elderly, disabled or chronically ill

BY LYDIA LISSMAN

People like Janet can get to feeling pretty lonely. In her 60s, Janet is the sole caregiver for her 76-year-old husband, who has Alzheimer's disease.

As the caregiver, Janet is responsible for helping her husband with meals, medications and other needs of daily life, including remembering things that he often forgets.

Janet's husband, besides needing a great deal of assistance, is also far less helpful around the house than he used to be. Nor, in the interests of his safety, can Janet leave her husband alone at home.

Janet may feel lonely, but she is hardly alone.

In the next year, as many as 200,000 Oregonians will provide some level of care at home for a family member who is elderly, disabled or chronically ill. At least 80 percent of all at-home care in Oregon is provided by a family caregiver.

Most Oregonians are aware that our state is a leader in providing long-term care options for seniors and people with disabilities. But fewer know that help is also available for family members providing care and other support to loved



ones at home.

These are among available supports:

Online help is available at the Oregon Cares Web site, a state-sponsored Web site that delivers a wealth of medical, financial, legal and other information for family caregivers.

Caregivers who need a break may contact the Lifespan Respite program. Lifespan Respite can refer you to caregivers who will help you get a break from caregiving to take care of yourself (shopping,

appointments or recreation, perhaps). To locate your local office, you may either call toll free at 866-219-7218 or log on to the DHS Web site.

The Family Caregiver Support Program provides counseling, respite, education, support groups and other services for family members who are caring for individuals age 60 and older and for grandparents and other relatives age 60 and older who are raising children and teens under age 18. More information is available from your nearest

office of the Oregon Department of Human Services or Area Agency on Aging. To locate an office near you, call toll free 800-232-3020 or log on to the DHS Web site.

Or perhaps you live in Oregon but want to locate resources for an elderly family member living in another state. You may use the federally sponsored Eldercare Locator by calling 800-677-1116 or by logging on to The Eldercare Locator Web site for local agency names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail and Web addresses.

Even with all these resources, family caregivers need the continued support of friends, neighbors and relatives.

Each of us can lend a hand by cooking a meal, providing a break, doing a chore or sharing information about these resources to family caregivers.

With so much help so close, and with good neighbors like you, family caregivers like Janet needn't be lonely as they perform this important work.

Lydia Lissman is Oregon Department of Human Services assistant director for seniors and people with disabilities. November is National Family Caregivers Month.

JUST TELL THE TRUTH

(AP)—Scholars are objecting to a National Park Service text that does not mention that the house in Philadelphia used by President George Washington had a slaves' quarters attached to it.

Instead, the Independence National Historical Park's Web site refers to a "large servants' hall" that Washington had attached to the back of the house. No more lying, just tell the truth,"

said Charles L. Blockson, curator of the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection at Temple University.

Some historians and blacks began protesting last spring when it was revealed that the park service's new pavilion for the Liberty Bell, scheduled to open in 2003, would be located near where Washington's slaves lived.

The park service promised to

include exhibits on slavery at the new Liberty Bell Center. A U.S. House committee also required the park service to commemorate the nation's first presidential mansion, including an acknowledgment that slaves lived and worked there.

The house, torn down in the 1830s, was home to Washington and John Adams before the nation's capital moved from Philadelphia.

Park service spokesman Phil Sheridan said the Web site does not refer to a slaves' quarters because nobody knows whether the slaves had separate quarters, or shared space with white indentured servants and free white servants.

"Can we say it was for the exclusive housing and feeding of slaves? We have no historical evidence to say that it was," Sheridan said.

The Portland Observer

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