

## Report says family caregivers doing more

by Chris Thomas, Oregon News Service

Despite a boom in assisted living and elder-care services, family members still handle most of the daily care-giving for older relatives. These "jobs" are worth \$5.5 million in Oregon and \$450 billion nationwide, according to a new report from AARP, affecting caregivers' health and financial security as they juggle these responsibilities.

About 90 percent of the in-home care needed by older adults is provided by family members, according to the report, which adds that as people live longer and families are smaller, there are fewer relatives to pitch in. And those who do often neglect their own needs, says study co-author Susan Reinhard, AARP senior vice president for public policy. At midlife, she notes, many people quit their jobs or go

part-time to care for older relatives, "We know that their retirement security is in jeopardy. This is true for both men and women that provide this kind of care: An average of over \$300,000 in lost income and benefits over the caregiver's lifetime."

In Oregon, the report estimates 463,000 people are family caregivers, providing services that would otherwise cost more than \$12 an hour. It suggests more support in a number of areas, such as better follow-up after hospital visits, flex-time policies on the job, and financial assistance and respite care for caregivers.

The average unpaid caregiver, the report says, is a 49-year-old woman, putting in about 20 hours a week – but that's just an average. Vicki Schmall, professor emeritus of gerontology at Oregon State University, says caregivers come in all ages. What they

have in common, she says, is that most don't have the training or the support network to help them with their family member's health conditions, "We have caregivers that are in their 80s and 90s, providing care to a spouse. And then sometimes, may have a 20-year-old or a teenager that is providing care to a family member."

Having an outside expert assess a family's situation and make recommendations about the kinds of help available is a good start, Schmall says. The state has an Aging and Disabilities Resource Connection website at [adrcfor.org](http://adrcfor.org) for caregivers. The AARP website, [aarp.org](http://aarp.org), also contains information.

The report, "Valuing the Invaluable: The Growing Contributions and Costs of Family Caregiving," is online at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).

## EPA works with states to protect beachgoers from water pollution

Pacific Northwest and Alaska beaches will be safer for swimming thanks to \$717,000 in beach monitoring grants to the states of Alaska, Oregon, Washington, and to the Makah Tribe on Washington's Olympic Peninsula.

The grants, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, will boost water quality monitoring efforts, make warnings or closure notices more timely and protect swimmers and beach users from pollution. Alaska, Oregon, Washington and Makah Tribe will use the grant funds for collecting and reporting water quality data such as harmful bacteria, and notifying the public of any water quality concerns. The grants will go to: State of Alaska, \$154,000, Oregon Public Health Authority, \$236,000, Washington State Department of Ecology, \$277,000, Makah Tribe, \$50,000.

"Our goal is to keep all beaches safe for recreation," said Mike Bussell, EPA's Direc-

tor of the Office of Water and Watersheds in Seattle. "These grants help our state partners keep a close watch on coastal water quality, giving beachgoing families the protection they deserve."

Nationwide, EPA is providing almost \$10 million this year in beach grants to 37 states, territories, and tribes to help protect swimmers and beachgoers at America's beaches.

State and local monitoring and notification programs often differ across the country and provide varying levels of swimmer protection. EPA beach grants are intended to ensure that the public receives better protection when traveling to beaches across the country. The program is authorized by the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act (BEACH Act) of 2000. EPA estimates that Americans make a total of 910 million trips to coastal areas each year, spending about \$44 billion.

## What is real price of carbon pollution?

by Chris Thomas, Oregon News Service

If everything in life has its price, the price of carbon is \$21 a ton, according to the federal government. This means every ton of carbon emissions from car tailpipes, power plants and manufacturing causes about \$21 worth of damage to people and the environment, or about 21 cents for every gallon of gasoline burned.

A new study from a Portland-based think tank made up of 200 economists nationwide says that figure is far too low. Economists at Tufts University who are members of the Economics for Equity and the Envi-

ronment (E3) Network say a more realistic estimate would be from \$264 to \$893 per ton.


Kristen Sheeran, director of economics for E3 Network, explains that putting a "social cost" on carbon is one way to help people understand the effects of climate change pollution – and not only on the environment, "We think about it as a change in ecosystems; we think about it as affecting polar bears. Relatively few people think about what climate change will mean to the quality of their life in the future, to the quality of their children's lives, and what all of those changes will mean, in dollar terms."

Sheeran explains that the social cost figure is important because it could be used for setting rules about fuel economy, power-plant regulations and more. If it is flawed or outdated, relevant federal or state

decisions about curbing carbon emissions could be, too, she warns, "What these numbers suggest is that the current estimates we may be using to affect policy decisions are many orders of magnitude off. So, which side do you want to err on? The kinds of risks and impacts that scientists are talking about from climate change are potentially irreversible."

The report does not suggest that the government impose a carbon tax of hundreds of dollars per ton on industry, Sheeran says. Rather, it points out that \$21 per ton is so low, it sends a message that climate change is not much of a problem, when even government scientists agree that is not the case.

The report, "Climate Risks and Carbon Prices" is available at [www.e3network.org/social\\_cost\\_carbon.html](http://www.e3network.org/social_cost_carbon.html).



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