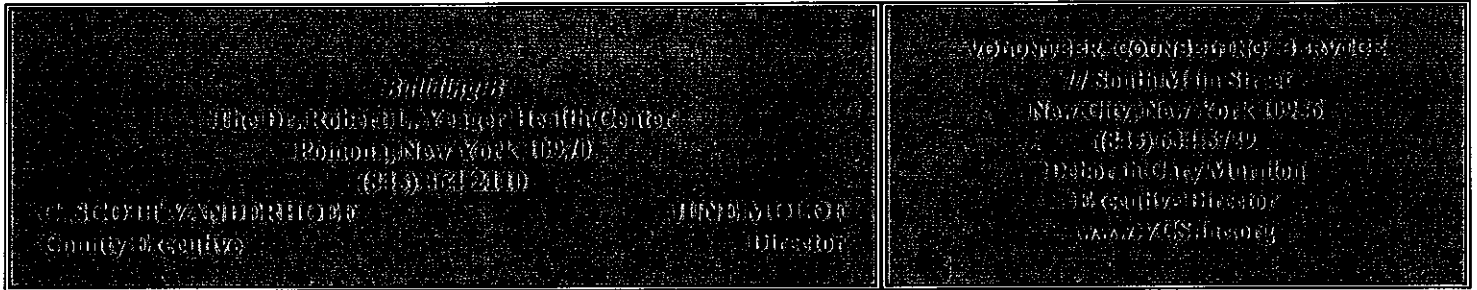


CAREGIVER NEWSLETTER



"Caregivers Need Help Too..."

IDENTIFYING THE CAREGIVER

July-August 2009

Are you a "Caregiver"? It is a word that deserves a capital "C", as it is a complex and under-appreciated job, that deserves respect and recognition. How does anyone know they are a Caregiver, when sometimes the relationship shifts very subtly from wife, or husband or adult child to being involved in the life of your loved one in a very different way? It is not always easy to recognize. If there is a life-changing event, such as a stroke, then it is easier to know that you have a new role in life. Even then, sometimes, it takes time to accept that life will be different, whether temporarily or permanently, and to learn what to do and how to do it to make it easier for everyone involved.

If dementia presents itself in your loved one, new behavior is often attributed to other sources, mostly of a deliberate nature. There can be forgetfulness, confusion or anger that was never a personality trait previously, that now shows up in unexpected and unpleasant ways. Before a doctor's visit occurs, people often think their loved one is acting in this new way on purpose. After the doctor's visit, where one has learned that there is a physiological cause, is usually the time when people begin to realize that there needs to be a new plan of action. Somewhere along the way, a Caregiver has been born.

Caregiving is a very important job, because it is comprised of many parts. Sometimes being a Caregiver means keeping a watchful eye over someone, who was previously innately independent and self-reliant. They may now

sometimes do things that are a little off-kilter, and bear watching in a subtle way that maintains their morale and self-image. This is a time when family issues can come to a head. Family can be supportive, or present conflicts that make Caregiving more complicated.

In a much more concrete way, Caregiving may involve accompanying your loved one on trips to the doctor's office, doling out medication, making the house safe in case there are physical limitations, perhaps installing a ramp for a wheelchair, and bars in the bathtub. Caregiving can mean helping someone bathe and complete other personal tasks, help with eating and toileting. Sometimes the difficult choice has to be made of whether or not a move to a nursing home would be best.

The more concrete assistance is more often identified as Caregiving, but the subtle involvement is not usually given the credit and acknowledgement and identification that it deserves. Whenever a relationship is unbalanced in its give and take, the one who is doing the giving, no matter how lovingly or willingly, runs the risk of wearing out over a period of time.

Caregivers need to take care of themselves, or they will burn out. They need their own personal time; they need to take a break, whether that means to stay home and relax, or go shopping or out to lunch with friends, without the person to whom they devote their time and love, as long as the caregiving recipient is safely cared for.

Caregivers need to be able to do some of these nurturing activities for themselves without the overwhelming guilt that accompanies them.

Help is available for the important and overworked caregiving population -- you do not have to shoulder all the responsibility alone. A **support group** for caregivers meets every week on **Wednesdays from 11 AM to 12 Noon, at VCS Inc., 77 South Main Street, New City.** The phone number is **634-5729 ext. 319.** The CARE Group provides support and guidance with the many issues women and men Caregivers are faced with. Caregivers can speak freely about their feelings with others in similar circumstances, and avail themselves of the information, resources and alternatives they may otherwise not be aware of. If you relate to any of the above, come to the **CARE Group** and see how it can help you.

VCS also runs a monthly support group for **Grandparents/Relatives Raising Children**, a growing population in need of support and assistance. This group meets the **first Monday of each month from 12 Noon to 1:30 PM at VCS Inc., 77 South Main Street, New City.** Information about this group, or about any of our services relating to senior citizens, can be obtained by calling **634-5729 ext. 319, or email ejacobson@vcs-inc.org.**

Everyone could benefit from someone to talk to, and VCS Inc. offers free confidential counseling to homebound seniors (**Outreach to Elders**), or affordable counseling for those who can come to the agency. We all have issues that we could work through with a good listener who's been professionally trained at VCS. **Call Ellie at 634-5729 ext. 319, or email ejacobson@vcs-inc.org for more information.**

Rockland County is lucky. We have the Office for the Aging (where Marilyn Wekar fields many questions at the Senior Care Helpline, 364-3444), Adult Protective Services, 364-2020 AND the **CAREGIVER HOTLINE.**

WHAT is the CAREGIVER HOTLINE?

The **CAREGIVER HOTLINE** gives you an opportunity to make a phone call and get some immediate answers to your questions, get

resources or find a sympathetic ear. **Every Wednesday from 12 Noon to 1 PM,** I will be available to answer your questions as best I can. If I can't help you right away, I will look into it and get back to you. **Call me, Ellie Jacobson, at 634-5729 ext. 319.**

In addition, **Rockland County** has other wonderful resources, programs, social and volunteer opportunities for seniors. **InfoRock @364-2020** was designed as an enhanced Information and Referral services that is user-friendly and available from 8 AM to 8 PM Monday through Friday. **Also, 211 is a 24-hour information and referral service.**

It's just as important to check in with our friends in the summer as well as in the winter. The hot weather takes its toll, so drink plenty of water, wear sunglasses, a hat and sunscreen, and stay cool!

CARE

VCS sponsors CARE, a
**Caregiver Support Group with the
 Rockland County Office for the Aging**
 It meets every Wednesday
 From 11 AM to 12 Noon at
VCS Inc.
77 South Main Street, New City

**For more information
 Call VCS at 634-5729 ext 319
ejacobson@vcs-inc.org**

VOLUNTEER COUNSELING SERVICE IS A NON-PROFIT AGENCY THAT DEPENDS ON THE GENEROSITY OF THE COMMUNITY. IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW, WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A DONATION, A BEQUEST OR LEAVE A LEGACY, PLEASE CALL THE NUMBER ABOVE. THANK YOU!
