

ENGAGE

The quarterly caregiver newsletter from AGE of Central Texas

"Tackling the challenges of aging with expert solutions"

Fall 2015

| www.AGEofCentralTX.org



Claude's Thanksgiving

By Annette Juba, LCSW

Deputy Director of Programs at AGE of Central Texas

As a social worker who has worked with older adults for my entire career, I have heard a lot of life stories. Professionally, these stories, their importance, and their interpretation are wrapped into a paradigm called "narrative theory." Practically, they are moving or funny or evocative. Always, they are inspirational.

With the holidays upon us, I'd like to tell you the story of one of the first clients who made a lasting impression on me:

Claude was an inaugural member of an Early-Stage Alzheimer's Support Group that I facilitated. This was in the days when "Alzheimer's" was used sparingly. More often than not in my early career, people with cognitive deficits were diagnosed with "Organic Brain Syndrome."

When the group formed, I was new to the social work field. Most of my direct experience came from working as an Activity Director in a nursing home. As an Activity Director, it had been my job to create experiences and events that would be fun and make people happy.

Claude and his fellow group members faithfully reported to the church basement for our support group meeting each month. The modalities I was most comfortable with, and that seemed most appropriate for our meeting that November, were reminiscence therapy and life review. Accordingly, I planned a discussion that would carry us through an hour and a half of nostalgia.

I assumed we would pleasantly explore the past Thanksgivings of the groups members' childhoods: dinners at grandparent's houses, favorite foods, and playing with cousins. Indeed, the conversation started down that path, and I relaxed into my role of encouraging the give and take among group members.

Then Claude began to speak. Unlike the others, he did not describe childhood or young adult memories. Instead, he began describing the upcoming Thanksgiving with children and grandchildren gathered at his house, and his wife cooking many of their traditional favorite meals.

From these comfortable musings, he proceeded to talk of his diminished role in the family festivities and how he would be an observer rather than an active participant in most of the goings on. The losses he experienced in other areas of his life – he could no longer drive, he was physically frail and unable to work in his yard anymore, and his difficulties concentrating and focusing meant he no longer managed his finances on a daily basis – would be mirrored in the holiday gathering.

I was taken completely by surprise then when he announced that *this* would be his favorite Thanksgiving. In spite of everything, he was still looking forward in his life. *This* Thanksgiving, he said, would absolutely be the best because it might be the last he would understand.

It is very hard to write about the holidays without jumping to mental images of perfect nostalgia. And, according to my Google search, it is impossible to think about caregiving during the holidays without also thinking about stress. Claude wisely taught me not to be tempted by this perfect vision and not to be completely overwhelmed by the nostalgia of the past.

Jolene Brackey, author of the book *Creating Moments of Joy*, would agree. As the title of her book suggests, our lives are comprised of joyous *moments*. We might have to look for them, but even within stressful days, there are opportunities for joyous moments. In this holiday season, I am grateful for the gift of Claude's wisdom. On behalf of all of us at AGE of Central Texas, I wish each of you the vision the find joyous moments in your days.



Free Caregiver Seminar

Medicare/Medicaid Updates - Insurance Options for Seniors

Trelisha Brown from the Texas Legal Services Center will discuss updates and changes to Medicare and Medicaid that could affect you during this year's open enrollment

Saturday, November 14, 2015
10:00 AM to Noon

AGE of Central Texas will host the free caregiver support seminar "Medicare/Medicaid Updates - Insurance Options for Seniors" from 10:00 am to Noon on Saturday, November 14. Part of the on-going workshop series to help family members effectively care for an older loved one, the free seminar will be held in the St. David's Foundation Conference Room (formerly the Large Meeting Room) at the AGE Building, located at 3710 Cedar Street, Austin, TX 78705.

The seminar will discuss the latest updates on Medicare and Medicaid with expert Trelisha Brown from the Texas Legal Services Center. The annual Fall Open Enrollment period runs from October 15 through December 7 in 2015 for new coverage that takes effect on January 1, 2016.

Participants can register by calling (512) 600-9275 or online at <http://tinyurl.com/AgeNovember2015>. A limited amount of free respite care for older family members will also be available during the seminar at AGE's Austin Adult Day Health Center by RSVP only. To RSVP for respite, please request the service with online registration or call Gailyn Trammell at (512) 600-9275 no later than November 11.

Get More Caregiver Resources, Delivered to Your In-Box!

Sign up for the AGE of Central Texas
Caregiver Communique

Register with your Smart Device

Or sign-up online at
www.AGEofCentralTX.org



National Family Caregivers Month Celebrates Respite this November

November is National Family Caregivers Month, and this year's national theme is "Respite: Care for Caregivers." Respite is the key to your own well-being – it protects your own health, strengthens family relationships, prevents burn-out and allows your loved one to stay at home up to three times longer. No wonder respite is one of the most frequently requested support services for family caregivers.

NATIONAL
FAMILY CAREGIVERS
MONTH
November 2015

"R" is for "Rest and Relaxation"

Everyone needs a little "R and R" – especially family caregivers. Relaxing is the best way to return refreshed to handle your many responsibilities as a caregiver.

"E" as in "Energize"

Caregiving is often round-the-clock 24/7. Respite isn't simply "getting a few hours off." It's necessary to help you reenergize, reduce stress, and provide care for your loved one.

"S" as in "Sleep"

Caregivers often have sleep problems. Address sleep problems and insomnia before they take too great a toll on your health.

"P" is for "Programs that Can Help You"

Respite – which can either be in the home or out of the home – can be hard to find but there are programs available to help you.

"I" as in "Imagination"

Let your mind run free; read a book; see a movie. You have been so occupied with the nuts-and-bolts of caregiving that refreshing your mind will actually help you be a better caregiver.

"T" as in "Take Five"

...or better yet, take ten. Do you find yourself saying, "I wish I had just ten minutes to myself"? Don't feel guilty. You need a reprieve – a few minutes to temporarily disengage.

"E" is for "Exhale"

A simple breath in and then a long exhale can help you focus and increase your vitality. A few deep breaths can give you more energy, reduce stress, and lift your mood.

Courtesy the Caregiver Action Network

Spotlight on the Early Memory Loss Support Program

The Early Memory Loss Support (EMLS) Program is an evidence-informed program of AGE of Central Texas, created specifically to serve people experiencing early memory loss, such as mild cognitive impairment or early stage dementia. The person-centered program focuses on the strengths of the participants at their ability levels. Participants enjoy cognitive and physical activities to exercise their brains as well as a professionally-facilitated support group.

Most importantly, the EMLS program provides a safe place where older adults experiencing early memory loss can share their challenges and emotions with others in similar situations. It is a safe place to share a laugh, enjoy the company of others, and stimulate the brain.

Participants meet from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm once a week, and the program is offered at four different locations on different days:

- YMCA North Austin Community Rec Center in North Austin
- Hope Lutheran Church in East Austin
- WellMed Senior Community Center in South Austin
- Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church in West Austin

The weekly participant support groups are facilitated by a licensed social worker or licensed professional counselor.

The EMLS Program is designed to provide brain exercise activities, education, and emotional support, with the goal of improving participants' quality of life. Research shows that brain exercise, physical exercise, and social activities are beneficial for people with early dementia. Although there is no cure for dementia, research shows that exercising the brain may help maintain memory.

Prospective participants must have a memory-related diagnosis from a doctor, or a demonstrated memory impairment, since program activities are informed by research about early dementia. Participants say that they have a community of support as they face the challenges of living with early memory loss.

Each week's agenda includes a variety of activities to stimulate the brain and engage our participants:



- Brain booster activities, including trivia, puzzles, word games, and learning about memory
- Current events discussion, providing opportunities for conversation and learning about world events
- Senior fitness, such as yoga or chair dancing
- Members bring their lunch to enjoy eating together. A licensed professional facilitates a support group for our participants, where they share challenges, tips, and advice related to coping with memory loss.
- Creative activities – such as creative writing, art, music therapy, improv theater – are intended to stimulate the brain in different ways, as well as introduce participants to something new that just might become a hobby.

The program also hosts monthly caregiver support groups for family members of participants, facilitated by a licensed professional. Family caregivers have the opportunity to meet with other caregivers and to learn about important resources. Additionally, caregivers have access to one-on-one consultation with AGE caregiver resource and information center staff and other services, such as Health Equipment Lending Program, Adult Day Health Center services, and free educational seminars.

For more information about joining the Early Memory Loss Support Program, please contact Program Director K.C. Lawrence at (512) 451-4611, ext. 236, or via email at klawrence@ageocentraltx.org. Additional information is also available online at www.AGEofCentralTX.org.

FREE Caregiver Education for Family Members Caring for a Loved One

CAREGIVERU
A Program of AGE of Central Texas

Classes are now forming in Travis, Williamson, Hays, and Bastrop Counties; find a free class near you:

www.CaregiverUcenTX.org



AGE of Central Texas is a non-profit organization that tackles the challenges of aging with expert solutions, offering programs, resources, and education for both older adults and those who care for them. Drawn from the words of our founders, Bert Kruger Smith and Willie Kocurek, our vision is to make aging a shared journey of triumph. Visit online at www.AGEofCentralTX.org or call **512-451-4611** for more information.

Adult Day Health Care

- Providing daytime care for older adults with physical or cognitive needs in the longest-operating licensed, non-residential Adult Day Health Centers in Central Texas
- Specialized in caring for individuals with memory loss or dementia
- Convenient locations in Austin and Round Rock, open Monday - Friday from 7:00 am - 5:30 pm
- Full-time nurse located at each Center to assist with medication management and health monitoring
- Activities designed to engage both the mind and body including music, brain boosters, tai chi, and more
- All-inclusive: full day of activities, meals and snacks, and transportation options
- Accepting Medicaid, Veteran's benefits, or private pay at \$60 per day
- Call today for additional information and to schedule a free visit:



Austin Adult Day Health Center
3710 Cedar Street
512-458-6305

Round Rock Adult Day Health Center
475 Round Rock West Drive, #120
512-255-4865

AGE of Central Texas is an Equal Opportunity Provider

AGE of Central Texas
www.AGEofCentralTX.org

Central Office and Austin Adult Day Health Center
3710 Cedar Street, Austin, TX 78705
512-451-4611

Round Rock Adult Day Health Center
475 Round Rock West Drive, #120,
Round Rock, TX 78681
512-255-4865

Caregiver Education & Resources

- Free personalized assistance and guidance by phone, email, or walk-in
- Free educational seminars and conferences with free respite services available
- Free caregiver support group meetings every month in Austin and Round Rock
- **CaregiverU:** Free evidence-based courses for non-professional, family caregivers, offered in Travis, Williamson, Hays, and Bastrop Counties. Visit www.CaregiverUcentx.org for current schedules.



Early Memory Loss Support

- Cognitive activities and support for individuals with a diagnosis of early-stage Alzheimer's disease or memory loss
- Four weekly locations around Central Texas with sessions from 9:30 am - 2:30 pm



Health Equipment Lending

- Free loans of gently-used durable medical equipment and free incontinence products available
- Call **512-600-9288** or email help@ageofcentraltx.org to inquire about availability or reserve items (no walk-ins, please)



Peer-Based Computer Classes

- Peer-to-peer technology instruction with personalized coaching assistance for adults (ages 50+)
- Low-cost classes and seminars on topics ranging from basic computer skills and brain fitness to advanced software and photo editing. Visit www.AGEcomputer.org for current class schedules.