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MEMBER



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CAREGIVING FROM AFAR

A recent article in *Money* magazine discusses the challenges faced by adult children whose aging parents live far from them. According to the National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC), approximately 7 million Americans care for a senior relative long-distance. They face guilt and anxiety from not being able to be there at a moment's notice to dealing with financial stresses. Such caregivers spend an average of \$8,700 per year on support for their family members, which is nearly twice as much as those who live closer to their parents. Some of the added expense is because of travel, but the long-distance caregivers also incur additional expenses in hiring people and services. There are several strategies that these caregivers can use to help reduce stress and maintain a good quality of care.

First, assess your parents' needs. You can begin by observing your parents and their environment when you visit. Look for unopened bills and letters on the counter, and food in the refrigerator that is well past the expiration date. Notice whether your parents are still steady on their feet. When you are back in your own home, keep in touch by phone, or by a video chat service such as Skype. These video visits can enable you to observe changes in condition such as weight loss or confusion. Software such as PointerWare and InTouchLink can help simplify computer interfaces for the elderly. Donna Wagner, a gerontology professor at Towson University, says, "You're looking for significant changes from normal patterns." You can also enlist the support of friends and neighbors who can contact you if they notice anything unusual. If your parents have a physician's visit while you are in town, see if your parents will permit you to accompany them to the appointment, and try to get them to sign HIPAA consent forms so the physician can share information with you.

If you think that your parents could benefit from assistance, talk with your parents in a way that does not express your fears. For example, "Dad, I noticed that your refrigerator is empty. I wonder if we could do something to help you with grocery shopping." You may be able to put together a plan that consists of family and friends willing to help with taking your parents to their healthcare providers, having them over for meals, or doing laundry.

You might be able to arrange for grocery deliveries from the store or for someone to periodically clean the house. If your parents need assistance managing their financial affairs, then, you will need a general durable power of attorney, and you can also work with your parents on establishing online access to their accounts to help with bill paying. Shared online calendars, such as www.lotsahelpinghands.com, www.cozi.com, or www.google.com/calendar, can help coordinate efforts.

If you have gaps to fill, there may be services available in your community to assist. Your local agency on aging may be able to help you access services such as meal programs, transportation, and social activities. The employers of the adult children may be able to assist as well; some large companies may offer elder care referrals through the employee assistance program or benefits package.

If your parents require more assistance to be able to stay in their home, then you may have to hire aides to provide additional help. Home health aides may be needed if medical monitoring is appropriate. Personal care aides can assist with cooking, light housekeeping, and bathing. Coordinating these activities from afar can be a challenge. Oast & Hook's life care planning services can assist by providing an assessment of the situation, including recommendations and referrals for services. A care manager can help coordinate services so the parents can stay in their home as long as it continues to be safe. Life care planning also provides information regarding available resources and benefits to help pay for care. Your family and you can have peace of mind that your parents are being well cared for.

The attorneys at Oast & Hook can assist clients and their families with their estate, financial, insurance, life care, veterans' benefits and special needs planning issues.

Ask Allie

O&H: Allie, we've heard about a special bond between a woman and her cat in Canada. Please tell us about it.

Allie: Sure! Claire Foley was living in Montreal, working on her master's degree, when she met Sammy in the Montreal SPCA. Sammy, short for Samantha, was a small, thin, one-year-old cat looking for a forever, loving home. Claire had never had a pet before, but after holding Sammy, she decided to bring her home. Sammy became a seasoned frequent flyer as she and Claire traveled to Ontario to visit Claire's family during holidays and long weekends. Sammy and Claire later moved to Toronto, and when Claire married her husband Glenn a few years ago, Glenn won Sammy over. The family now includes a cat named James Bond. Sammy is now 15 years of age and she is enjoying her senior years. What a nice story. I know I'm very happy with my mom and our other cat Crissy. Time to see if Crissy wants to play See you next week!

Announcement

Oast & Hook is proud to announce that it has partnered with Commonwealth Assisted Living to offer a series of seminars for veteran seniors and their families. Each seminar will cover veterans benefits, veteran's aid and attendance, elder law, Medicare, and long-term care planning. The seminars will begin at 6:00 p.m. and will end at 7:00 p.m.. Below are the dates and locations of each seminar. Seating is limited. If you have any questions or if you would like to register for one of these seminars, then please phone Oast & Hook at 757-399-7506.

May 24, 2012

Georgian Manor
651 River Walk Parkway
Chesapeake, Virginia 23320
Tel: 757-436-9618

June 7, 2012

The Ballentine
7211 Granby Street
Norfolk, Virginia 23505
Tel: 757-440-7400

Distribution of This Newsletter

Oast & Hook encourages you to share this newsletter with anyone who is interested in issues pertaining to the elderly, the disabled, and their advocates. The information in this newsletter may be copied and distributed, without charge and without permission, but with appropriate citation to Oast & Hook, P.C. If you are interested in a free subscription to the *Oast & Hook News*, then please e-mail us at mail@oasthook.com, telephone us at 757-399-7506, or fax us at 757-397-1267.

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