

# Connecticut Care Planning Council



December 2011 Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 12

## Featured Board Member: **Henry C Weatherby**

### CT Care Planning Council Advisory Board Members:



Weatherby & Associates, PC  
Counselors at Law  
Helping Families Preserve and Protect Assets and Values

Henry C. Weatherby  
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#### [If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, Weatherby & Associates, PC can help.](#)

The [Connecticut Care Planning Council \(CTCPC\)](#) lists companies and individual providers on our website who help families deal with the crisis and burden of long term care.

One purpose of the CTCPC is to educate the public on the need for care planning *before* a crisis occurs. A second purpose is to provide, in one place, all of the available government and private services for eldercare.

Finally, our ultimate mission is to offer a trusted listing service that the public will recognize and turn to for expert help in dealing with the challenges of long term care.

**Call us at 860-769-6938**

or click [here](#) to send an e-mail

Elaine Pavasaris



John Carmon



Kristine Lajeunesse



Weatherby & Associates, PC  
Counselors at Law  
Helping Families Preserve and Protect Assets and Values

## If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, Weatherby & Associates, PC can help

- Has the elder been diagnosed with a mentally or physically debilitating disorder such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, ALS, stroke or a decline in functional capacity?
- Is the elder isolated due to the recent death of a spouse, or have family that either lives too far away or is too busy to provide adequate care?
- Is the elder soon to be discharged into a care facility or currently receiving in-home care?
- Does the elder have a variety of healthcare providers and need coordination and advocacy for quality care?
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### Event Calendar:

#### VA Aid & Attendance Seminars

**December 8, 2011**  
The Caring Connection  
330 Windsor Ave,  
Windsor  
3:30-5:00 PM  
or  
6:00-7:30 PM

**Offers & Info:**  
[Veterans Aid & Attendance Benefits](#)

**Contact Us:**  
34 Jerome Avenue,  
Suite 310  
Bloomfield CT 06002

(860)769-6938

- Does the elder have a spouse whose financial needs must be considered in light of the elder's medical condition?

## Celebrating Family Caregivers - National Caregivers Month

Debbie turned the ringing alarm off. It was 6:00AM and time to get herself ready for the day. Her son would be there soon to help her shower and dress her husband Jim. Her son came every day before work to help because Debbie, at 75 years old and suffering with arthritis, could not lift Jim out of bed or help him to the shower. This has been the daily routine since Jim's stroke a year ago. When her son leaves for work, Debbie spends the day caring for Jim's needs.

President Barack Obama, in his [Presidential Proclamation](#) of National Family Caregivers Month - 2011 states:

"Across our country, millions of family members, neighbors, and friends provide care and support for their loved ones during times of need. With profound compassion and selflessness, these caregivers sustain American men, women, and children at their most vulnerable moments, and through their devoted acts, they exemplify the best of the American spirit." Statistics from the [Administration On Aging](#) show that the population 65 and older is expected to grow from its current 13% to 19% of the total population by 2030. With the older population increasing, the need for elder caregiving will continue to increase. Family caregivers play a vital role in filling these caregiving needs. Who better than family can understand the needs and ensure the best care of their loved ones. Caregiving can be very stressful and demanding. In the case of a healthy spouse or a child living with the disabled person at home, caregiving can be a 24 hour, 7 day a week commitment. But even for the caregiver not living in the home, looking after a loved one or friend can consume all of the caregiver's free time.

Surveys and studies consistently show that depression is a major problem with full-time informal

caregivers. This is typically brought on by stress and fatigue as well as social isolation from family and friends. If allowed to go on too long, the caregiver can sometimes break down and may end up needing long term care as well.

A typical pattern may unfold as follows:

1 to 18 months--the caregiver is confident, has everything under control and is coping well. Other friends and family are lending support.

20 to 36 months--the caregiver is taking medication to sleep and control mood swings. Outside help dwindles away and except for trips to the store or doctor, the caregiver has severed most social contacts. The caregiver feels alone and helpless.

38 to 50 months--Besides needing tranquilizers or antidepressants, the caregiver's physical health is beginning to deteriorate. Lack of focus and sheer fatigue cloud judgment and the caregiver is often unable to make rational decisions or ask for help. It is often at this stage that family or friends intercede and find other solutions for care. This may include respite care, hiring home health aides or putting the disabled care recipient in a facility. Without intervention, the family caregiver may become a candidate for long term care as well.

Since most family members go into informal caregiving without training or counseling, they often aren't aware of the possible outcome described above. It is therefore extremely important to seek counseling and to formulate a plan of action prior to making a caregiving commitment.

According to the [National Care Planning Council](#):

" In 1965, Congress passed the Older Americans Act which provides guidance and funding to the States to give help to caregivers. All states offer programs at no cost or very low cost which might include: counseling, caregiver training, respite care, adult day care, meals, support groups and much, much more. It is vital for the health and longevity of all caregivers to make use of these services."

([www.longtermcarelink.net](http://www.longtermcarelink.net))

In 1994 President Clinton proclaimed a week in November as National Family Caregivers week to be observed with appropriate programs and activities. It has since been changed to the whole month of

November with each President giving a yearly proclamation for its observance.

Government assistance is available all over the country. Area Agencies on Aging and local senior centers give aid and support to family caregivers. Numerous religious and community organizations also lend their support.

This month of November 2011, as individuals, we can take note of those around us, in our families and community, who are family caregivers. A note of acknowledgement of their service, a gift of thanks or even an offering of our time to give them a needed break would let them know their service is recognized and appreciated.

## **The Perfect Holiday Caregiver: It's all a state of mind**

The holidays are always a wonderful time of year for family gatherings, reflection on what we have and the spirit of giving. The television is packed with specials showing relationships and families coming together for the holidays.

But the holidays can also be a time of stress and sadness for those who are caring for family members that are struggling with health problems, frailty, dementia and loss. Those who care for these individuals may feel overwhelmed, frustrated, depressed or resentful as they watch "perfect" families enjoying the holidays. There are many surveys and documents that show that caregivers are highly susceptible to these feelings. If you are a caregiver, there are measures you can take to avoid this.

### **First; Remember, that you are not alone.**

If you are new to caregiving or have been caring for someone for a very long time, remember that the perfect family on television is not reality for many Americans. You are not the only one with these challenges. A recent study by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP found that 44.4 million Americans age 18 or older are providing unpaid care to an adult. In fact according to the survey provided by the National Family Caregivers Association:

- The typical caregiver is a 46-year-old Baby Boomer woman with some college education who works and spends more than 20 hours per week caring for her mother who lives nearby.
- Female caregivers provide more hours of care and provide a higher level of care than male caregivers.
- Almost seven in ten (69%) caregivers say they help one person.
- The average length of caregiving is 4.3 years.
- Many caregivers fulfill multiple roles. Most caregivers are married or living with a partner (62%), and most have worked and managed caregiving responsibilities at the same time (74%).

### **Second; Find help.**

There are many resources available to a caregiver. Some of these include family members, friends, a local religious group, [elder care agencies](#) and [homecare providers](#). The internet provides many great resources and help. The [National Care Planning Council](#) offers many articles, brochures and local referrals to help caregivers find the help that they need.

*“When my husband’s stepfather was released from the hospital in December of 2009, he called us to give him a ride home. Once he was home, we quickly realized that he was not able to care for himself at all. He lived alone and we found ourselves driving back and forth three or four times a day to assist all of his needs. It was overwhelming and frightening to suddenly become a caregiver to a man we weren’t even that close to. With my husband working full time days, I became his primary caregiver. I would pack up my two little girls every day to come with me to take him to the doctor, do his laundry and feed him his meals, do his grocery shopping and help him with his bills. I had no idea what his finances were like or how to pay his medical bills. He was too sick to care or even understand what I was saying to him. I quickly realized I was going to have to find help. First I called his children. They were sympathetic, but gave*

*all kinds of excuses as to why they could not help. Next, I went to the internet. I went to the website for National Care Planning Council [www.longtermcarelink.net](http://www.longtermcarelink.net) and found and contacted a Care planner in my area. The Care Planner came to my stepfather's house and met with the two of us. They helped me get organized and set up time to meet with someone to explain his Medicare services and what my next steps would be. It was such a relief to have a plan and to know what to do." MH- Salt Lake City, Utah*

Most family members are willing to help, but just don't know what to do. Many caregivers feel that they are the only one who can give the best care. It is important to communicate with other family members about what kind of help you need and let them know specifically what they can do.

A number of organizations and private companies will give you advice and guidance -- many for free. If your care recipient has a very low income, you might get free help from your local [Area Agency on Aging](#). A lot depends on available funds. Click here for a [nationwide list of agencies](#).

A good source for professional advice is the rapidly growing business of [non-medical home care companies](#). Most will offer free consultations and will provide paid aides to help you with your loved-one with such things as bathing, dressing, shopping, household chores, transportation, companionship and much more. These people may also help you coordinate adult daycare or other community services.

You may wish to pay for a formal assessment and care plan from a [professional geriatric care manager](#). Even though it may cost you a little money to hire a care manager, this could be the best money you will ever spend. Care managers are valuable in helping find supporting resources, providing respite, saving money from care providers, finding money to pay for care, making arrangements with family or government providers and providing advice on issues that you may be struggling with.

**Lastly; it is important to take care of yourself first in order to give effective and loving care.**

Stephen Covey tells a story in his book *The Seven*

*Habits of Highly Effective People* about a man who is sawing a tree. A woman approaches and asks the obviously exhausted man how long he has been sawing the tree. He tells her that he has been there for hours.

She says “Well, I see that your saw is dull, if you would just sharpen your saw you would be able to saw it much faster and with less effort.”

He replies, “I don’t have time to stop and sharpen my saw, I need to chop this tree down now!”

It seems pretty silly that the man just doesn’t stop for a few minutes to make the work easier. It is common for caregivers to do the same thing. They focus on caring for their loved one and run themselves down instead of stopping to “sharpen their saw”.

Covey states that “sharpening the saw” is to take care of yourself by keeping your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual self balanced. There is joy and respite in balancing all of these areas in our life. This is what makes us efficient and happy. Here are some ways for you as a caregiver to sharpen your own saw:

- Maintain a positive attitude. Take time to be grateful for everything that is good in your life. There is always something. Adjust your expectations for the holiday season. If you aren’t expecting that perfect holiday family picture, then you won’t be angry and frustrated that it isn’t something you have right now. It is always possible to change your attitude and perceptions, but it is not always possible to change your circumstances.
- Eat healthy food and be sure to get some exercise. Do this in small increments if it is too overwhelming to plan menus. Drink more water, cut down on sugary snacks, pick up some vegetables and fruit to grab. Walk or do marching in place. Run or walk up and down stairs if that is all the time you have right now.
- Forgive and let go of frustrations, anger, resentment and guilt. These are common feelings for caregivers. The best thing a

caregiver can do for their own emotional health is to clear out these negative thoughts and feelings. Get counseling, talk to a friend or family member or simply write down the negative feelings to get them out of your system. Never take your anger and frustrations out on those you care for.

- Take time to do something you enjoy and give yourself a little bit of rejuvenation everyday. Laughter is a great stress reliever. Find something funny to read or get on the internet and find a funny video to watch.
- During the holidays, be easy on yourself. If you enjoy holiday activities, then get out there and do them. Ask someone to help with your caregiving duties even if it is just for an hour or two to shop or to see a concert or movie. There are day care facilities or home care services available for short term care. See [www.longtermcarelink.net](http://www.longtermcarelink.net) for a service in your area.

Being a “perfect” caregiver during the holidays does not have to look like the perfect on-screen holiday family. How you handle your circumstance will be the key to creating your own peace, happiness and cheer during the holiday season. The holidays can be a time of reflection on good things. Your attitude and a little care for yourself can make a big difference in the care that you give in the coming year.

## Wisdom from the Web

**"You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair."**

**~Douglas MacArthur**