A message from the Family Services Coordinator:

Happy New Year! Hope you all had a wonderful winter break and are feeling refreshed to take on 2019. The start of a new year is a great time to reflect on the year prior, celebrate successes and even acknowledge challenges you may have faced as a caregiver. It's also an opportunity to plan for how you and your loved one can embrace a healthy new year.

The purpose of this e-newsletter is to build greater awareness and connection to upcoming events, elder care topics, and highlight local resources. If you have suggestions, content you would like included in the future, or if you know of anyone who would like to subscribe to the newsletter, please contact me directly at alice.shi@vanderbilt.edu.

Alice Shi

Upcoming Events

Caregiver Support Group

Jan. 9th  12:00 - 1:00 PM
Guest Speaker: Karen Mevis, Information & Referral Coordinator, TN Disability Pathfinder
Light Hall Room 431

Boomers, Elders, & More Speaker Series

Jan. 16th  12:00 - 1:00 PM
Presented By: Ali Hulten, TN SHIP Program Coordinator
Join Ali Hulten as she presents an overview of Medicare, low income programs for Medicare beneficiaries, the new Medicare card and related scams, and the different services SHIP provides.

Light Hall Room 431

*See pages 7-8 for details on upcoming events

Monthly Mantra

LifeAsACaregiver #156

Life is difficult. We learn. We grow. Hopefully coupled with compassion for those we care for, and also for ourselves.
Hiding with my older sister in her S.U.V., I’m nauseated. We’re committing a heinous crime. Twenty feet away, I see a paramedic escort my silver-haired mother into the memory care center, a nursing home for patients with dementia and Alzheimer’s.

We’ve tricked Mom into coming here because she’s not safe living alone. Moments before, we set up her room with photos and labeled her clothing. Nurses recommended we stay out of sight. I feel like the worst daughter. But according to doctors and social workers, we’re doing the most caring thing.

Even as a child, my relationship with my mother was volatile. I constantly navigated her unpredictable emotions. To encourage positivity, I complimented her cooking, dressed like her mini-me, and parroted her disdain for our unassimilated Russian relatives. Good moods meant she’d share apple slices over a Doris Day movie, fry me blueberry blintzes, or help me fashion opera gloves from bubble bath while sitting next to me in the tub. Bad moods meant an endless cycle of slaps, me prostrating myself and her forgiving.

I always knew that my mother had had a hard life. As a girl in Russia, she watched her father bleed out after Nazis bombed the local railway station. At 27, she fell from a train, shattering her kneecap and almost dying from gangrene. She’d dreamed of becoming a singer, but instead married my father, an old bachelor and “the only man who’d marry a cripple,” my grandma said. In 1964, they abandoned everything with little money to immigrate to the United States.
Days later, my sister and I toured memory care centers. One smelled of urine and industrial cleaner with wheelchair-bound, despondent seniors. At $100,000 a year, it was one of the nicer places. They sent us home with a pecan pie to seal the deal.

We found a better facility with a B&B vibe and patient staff members who gave lots of hugs. My sister signed a 40-page contract making her liable if Mom injured another resident or destroyed property. We negotiated her level of care because bathing assistance bumped up the monthly price by $1,000. It felt like buying a car instead of caring for the woman who spoon-fed me chicken soup when I was sick.

Next, we needed to get my mother into the center. We had her admitted to the hospital, blaming her high blood pressure. Then, we said the doctor wanted her to go to physical rehab. Professionals call it “therapeutic lying” because honesty can increase dementia patients’ anxiety.

Find the full article at: https://nyti.ms/2zOArL8
In the hospital, I tried to feed her a bite of babka, but she had time-traveled to the Battle of Kursk. She was 14 years old, crouching behind a bush as a German fighter plane gunned down fleeing children. It was frightening but affirmed our conviction that this move was necessary.

Once she was in memory care, we couldn’t contact her for an agonizing 10 days to help her adapt. But we got reports: Mom wouldn't sleep in her room, parking herself in the lobby all night. She refused to eat. We worried that if she kept starving herself, she'd be sent to a more depressing, regular nursing home.

Then, she refused medication, claiming the pills were making her “lose her memory.” The staff hid meds in her food, but she resisted her glaucoma drops, risking blindness. When I visited, she was belligerent, insisting I take her back to her condo.

I was flooded with conflicting emotions. As our family Napoleon, my mother always forced her way. Now she was destroying her health to compel us to take her home. Seeing her in this fragile state, I wanted to give in. But I’d have to close the small business my husband and I built over 14 years and move home. I’d have to check on her every half-hour to ensure she didn’t fall. I’d have to bathe her, force-feed her food and meds and absorb her ire. A better person would make this sacrifice.

Three weeks later, we visited to celebrate my mother’s 89th birthday. We ate cake at a courtyard table beside a classic convertible. She complained that everyone there was crazy, so we changed topics — another strategy for dealing with dementia patients. My husband mentioned our wedding. “You got married?” she said, “Congratulations! I’m so happy for you!”

I wanted to correct her, reminding her that she had walked me down the aisle 14 years prior. Instead, I stroked her hand. My eyes got wet. Wrong and right were one and the same. This next chapter of her life would be painful. My only hope was that she’d become enveloped in a pleasant memory.

My mother’s face lit up and she laughed. She kissed me and held my husband’s bearded face in her hands. “You married such a nice man!”

“I did,” I said. As I hugged my mother goodbye, I wished we could live in this moment forever.

Marilyn Friedman is a writer and co-founder of Writing Pad, a creative writing school in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and online. She is working on a memoir about swing dancing.

Find the full article at: https://nyti.ms/2zOArL8
Research Opportunities

Caregiver Tips

**KNOW the 10 SIGNS**

*Early detection matters*

If you or someone you care about is experiencing any of the 10 warning signs of Alzheimer’s disease, please see a doctor to find the cause. Early diagnosis gives you a chance to seek treatment and plan for your future.

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1. **MEMORY LOSS** that disrupts daily life
   - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Forgetting important dates or events.
   - What’s a typical age-related change? • Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

2. **CHALLENGES** in planning or solving problems
   - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Having trouble following a familiar recipe.
   - What’s a typical age-related change? • Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook.

3. **DIFFICULTY** completing familiar tasks at home, at work or leisure
   - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Difficulty getting dressing or to a familiar location.
   - What’s a typical age-related change? • Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show.

4. **CONFUSION** with time or place
   - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately.
   - What’s a typical age-related change? • Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

5. **TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING** images and spatial relationships
   - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Having trouble reading and judging distance.
   - What’s a typical age-related change? • Vision changes related to cataracts.

6. **NEW PROBLEMS** with words in speaking or writing
   - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Struggling to find the right word.
   - What’s a typical age-related change? • Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

7. **MISPLACING THINGS** and losing the ability to retrace steps
   - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Losing things and being unable to go back over their steps to find them.
   - What’s a typical age-related change? • Misplacing things from time to time and retraceing steps to find them.

8. **DECREASED** or poor judgment
   - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Using poor judgment when dealing with money.
   - What’s a typical age-related change? • Making a bad decision once in a while.

9. **WITHDRAWAL** from work or social activities
   - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Having difficulty remembering how to complete a favorite hobby.
   - What’s a typical age-related change? • Sometimes feeling lousy, work, family, and social obligations.

10. **CHANGES** in mood and personality
    - What’s a typical Alzheimer’s-related change? • Becoming confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious at times.
    - What’s a typical age-related change? • Becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

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*alzheimer’s association®*
**Book of the Month**

A Caregiving.com choice for Best Caregiving Book of 2017, this poignant and timely memoir was also named American Book Fest’s 2017 Best Book Award Winner for Autobiography/Memoir. Even with her professional background as former hospice consultant who studied aging, illness, and the intricacies of the healthcare system, Melanie Merriman found the real-life experience of caring for her mother humbling. Written for people who have cared for a parent, are currently facing that challenge, or are aging parents themselves, Holding the Net offers practical details about the effects of aging on the body and mind, living arrangements for older people, health care decisions, and surviving a stay in a rehab facility. This story challenges the notion that anyone can be an expert when it comes to caring for an aging parent, and encourages readers simply to do their best.

**Resource Corner**

The Council on Aging (COA) of Middle Tennessee has created a free, online decision tool to help family caregivers and older adults learn more about their unique care needs and options.

Following a complimentary four-minute assessment, Roobrik’s “Is it time to get help?” decision tool provides family caregivers with a Care Fit Report, which offers personalized information about what kind of help is needed, where that kind of help can be found and how to talk to others about it. The counsel enables family caregivers to then use COA’s free, online Directory of Services for Seniors, which includes resources available in 13 Middle Tennessee counties, to identify and choose organizations that best fit their particular situation.

Follow the link to start the assessment: https://tools.roobrik.com/coamidtn/care/start
CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

JANUARY 9, 2019
12PM – 1PM
LIGHT HALL ROOM 431

GUEST SPEAKER: KAREN MEVIS

Karen Mevis is the Information & Referral Coordinator for Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, a statewide information and referral program that includes an online clearinghouse of disability-related resources and multilingual phone helpline.

Hosted by the Child & Family Center for Vanderbilt faculty, staff and students: The Caregiver Support Group is a monthly support group that offers a safe place to discuss the stresses, challenges, and rewards of providing care for a loved one. Feel free to bring your lunch and share your experience, advice, and support to other caregivers. Coffee & Tea will be provided.

Alice Shi | Family Services Coordinator
alice.shi@vanderbilt.edu
Boomers, Elders, and More Speaker Series

MEDICARE & TN SHIP

Presented by: Ali Hulten
TN State Health Insurance Assistance Program Coordinator

Join Ali Hulten as she presents an overview of Medicare, low income programs for Medicare beneficiaries, the new Medicare card and related scams, and the different services SHIP provides.

Feel free to bring your lunch! Coffee & Tea will be provided.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2019
12 P.M. - 1 P.M.
LIGHT HALL ROOM 431

Contact: Alice Shi | Family Services Coordinator | alice.shi@vanderbilt.edu