

# C CAREGIVER CHRONICLE

*Connections for Caregivers*

## Preparing for End-of-Life Decisions

By David Greenberg

In his role as one of the staff physicians at the Senior Health Care Center at Crown Pointe, Dr. Joel Rich may see patients for a number of years. But there is one thing that is probably true about the relationship between Dr. Rich and his patients. He is likely to be their last doctor.

In that role he is required to consider things that other physicians may not, and most likely at the top of that list is what kind of care a patient wants as they near the end of life.

“This is a very difficult issue because most patients don’t want to think about it until the end,” said Dr. Rich. “But that conversation is very important, and it should

include the patient, family, caregivers and the doctor.”

At the very least there should be some written advance



directive or Five Wishes and a durable power of attorney, he said. An advance directive is a document that spells out how you want to be cared for if you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself. A durable power of attorney gives someone you designate the power to make decisions – including medical decisions – for you. Five Wishes is a commonly used form, now recognized in most states that look at these five issues:

- Who you want to make healthcare decisions for you when you can’t.
- The kind of medical treatment you want or don’t want.
- How comfortable you want to be.
- How you want people to treat you.
- What you want your loved ones to know.

“Having at least one of  
(continued on next page)

## A Message From Cheryl Robinson

Welcome 2015! Another new beginning! A time for looking forward!

So, let’s begin this year with hope and positive thoughts about new things to come. Let’s take a little time to reflect and reassess our strengths, needs and resources. Instead of struggling with resolutions, let us see this as an opportunity to establish the best plan for caregiving for 2015. And let us include ourselves as we think about how to go forward. In this issue we have some thoughts from our dear friend, Tom Rinkoski, as he continues with another year of the Savvy Caregiver classes. Sam Boone provides us with additional information on exploitation and



protection of those we care for. We learn of the requirements that non-medical hired help must meet in order to provide care at home and to ensure safety and protection. And Dr. Rich shares a physician’s perspective on the importance of talking about medical care wishes. What better time than now to really think about those caregiving plans and what our goals will be for this year.

Let’s take a moment to consider what we value. How can we best honor the one we are caring for while also honoring ourselves? What needs to be clarified, addressed and discussed? The more clarity we have ourselves, the better prepared we will be to work with our caregiving team. And of course, let’s remember that we are not alone on this journey. We are all in this together. Happy 2015!

Cheryl Robinson, LCSW

## Preparing for End-of-Life Decisions

(continued from previous page)

these gives us some direction,” said Dr. Rich. “And with new, ever-changing technology, it becomes even more of a challenge for us if we don’t have a plan. With these documents in place, patients can be straightforward. Do they want comfort as the primary concern? Do they want everything done that can be done to live every day? There are so many variables. In reality, most people fall in between, and that’s why it’s so important to know their wishes.”

It may be that one of the biggest benefits of having these discussions and making sure these documents are in place is that it takes some stress off the patient, family, caregivers and doctors during a time when stress is already overwhelming.

“It eliminates guessing,” said Dr. Rich. “And

it often removes a lot of futile care – the kind of care we know is not going to be curative – and the expense that goes with it. In fact without clear direction, we sometimes end up prolonging the dying process.”

The major consequence of not having these discussions and prepared documents is undue suffering. The result can often be a poor dying process with prolonged suffering. People are in pain, the quality of life is extinguished, and there is a loss of dignity.

“When we plan things go smoother, and there are better results,” he said. “When you don’t talk about end-of-life care, things are much harder for everyone, and it is unnecessary. I wish all my patients would ask me to have that conversation.”

## Caregiver College

The Alzheimer’s Association is pleased to announce that we will be offering a Caregiver College in Gainesville in 2015. This is a new program in this area that we hope will meet the needs of caregivers who are looking for assistance with specific issues related to caregiving for a person with dementia. The topics for the classes were chosen in large part based on the results of a survey of Gainesville area caregivers conducted earlier this year.

Classes will mostly be small interactive sessions of one or two hours. Each class will focus on a specific issue. Some topics that will be covered throughout the year include: dealing with a diagnosis, legal planning, caregiver stress, driving issues, current research, behavior, communication and much more. Most classes will be offered more than once at different times of day to accommodate caregivers’ busy schedules.

Caregivers can attend just one session or every session during the year. There are no requirements to attend other than completing an orientation. These orientation sessions will be offered during the year so that caregivers can enroll at any time. We currently have orientations scheduled on January 21 at both 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. and would welcome any caregivers interested in learning more to register for one of these sessions.

If you wish to register for an orientation session for the Caregiver College or if you have any questions about the process, please contact David Huckabee, Associate Program Director, at (800) 272-3900 or [dhuckabee@alz.org](mailto:dhuckabee@alz.org).

### Community Coalition for Older Adults

Second Friday of the month, Senior Recreation  
Center, 5701 NW 34 St.

Contact Shirley Bloodworth at  
[sgblood@bellsouth.net](mailto:sgblood@bellsouth.net) for  
information.

### **Caregiver Chronicle is published every other month**

Published and produced by  
Greenberg Communications  
[www.greenbergcommunications.com](http://www.greenbergcommunications.com)  
Editorial Advisor: Cheryl Robinson, L.C.S.W.

Find us online at [www.caregiverchronicle.com](http://www.caregiverchronicle.com).  
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between our print issues.

## From the Desk of Sam W. Boone, Jr.:

### Financial Exploitation

By Sam Boone

*Editor's Note: This is part of a series of columns that will be presented in this newsletter by Sam W. Boone, Jr., a local attorney whose primary practice areas include elder law, estate planning, probate and trust administration. It is hoped that the information will be valuable for caregivers and family members dealing with issues related to elder law.*

Unfortunately, financial exploitation of older adults is a serious and all-too-common problem. As I mentioned in a previous *Caregiver Chronicle* article, senior citizens are at a higher risk than the regular population of being taken advantage of financially. A study published recently in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* revealed some troubling statistics about the abuse of the elderly.

Researchers interviewed more than 4,000 adults over the age of 60 living in New York. They found that:

- As many as one in 20 older adults in the U.S. may be financially exploited.
- Most older adults have had their money or property stolen or used improperly at some point.
- Roughly 80 percent of those interviewed had money or property stolen or misused over the past year.
- Victim's children were responsible for the financial abuse about 60 percent of the time, with neighbors and friends being responsible 17 percent of the time and paid home aides 15 percent of the time.
- Often, victims were living in some sort of care setting without their spouse.
- Those needing the most help maintaining their independence were particularly at risk for financial abuse.

There are many ways the elderly can be financially exploited. In some of the cases in the study, older people were forced or tricked into giving up their rights or property; others were forced or misled into signing or making changes to a legal document. This financial abuse of older Americans can have negative consequences that extend beyond an individual case.

"In addition to robbing older adults of resources, dignity and quality of life, it is likely costing our society dearly in the form of entitlement encumbrances, health care and other costs," said Janey Peterson of Weill Cornell Medical College in a journal news release.

Since financial exploitation and abuse is the most common form of elder abuse, these disturbing figures need to serve as a wake-up call for doctors, policy makers and caregivers, the study concluded. Financial exploitation covers a broad spectrum of abuses. Oftentimes, more vulnerable senior citizens fall victim to exploitation, and most often the perpetrators are family members or people the victim trusts. The elderly are common targets for financial abuse since, although people over 50 control nearly 70 percent of America's wealth, many seniors don't realize the value of their assets.



Additionally, older adults are more likely to be dependent on others who could take advantage of the senior's trust.

Whether you are a caregiver, the loved one of an elderly person at risk of abuse, or a senior citizen yourself, you should make sure to educate yourself about financial exploitation. The more you know and understand about the potential risks, the harder exploitation will be.

The Florida Department of Elder Affairs is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of elders here. Working with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Adult Protective Services and the Aging Network, it protects disabled adults or elderly persons from abuse, neglect or exploitation. Services provided may include protective supervision, placement and in-home and community-based services. To report elder abuse in Florida call 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873) or go online to [www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/report\\_abuse.php](http://www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us/doea/report_abuse.php).

Locally, exploitation can be reported to the Gainesville Police Department at (352) 334-2400 or the Alachua County Sheriff's Office at (352) 367-4000. Of course if it is an emergency, call 911.

*Sam W. Boone, Jr. is a Gainesville-based attorney practicing elder law and estate planning. He is past-president of the Academy of Florida Elder Law Attorneys. To learn more about elder-law issues, go online to [www. http://boonelaw.com](http://www.boonelaw.com), or call (352)-374-8308.*

## New Year Hopes & Dreams

By Tom Rinkoski

This is not about New Year's resolutions. As a caregiver I am forever awash in resolving to do this or that better. Nor is it that I am having a tough time typing 2015 instead of 2014. Too much like a person with dementia, my sense of time is all mashed up; whirred and beaten in a pot so much that I have trouble telling 2011 from 2015. I just keep putting one foot in front of another, you know. I try not to forget to put gas in the car. It's ironic, because I can remember doctor's appointments, and when the house payment is due (sometimes), but why worry about what year it is? Does it really matter?

As January 2015 slides into my life, my calendar is color coded for when I have to renew prescriptions and purchase the next round of Depends. I'm a fairly well organized caregiver, and my organization tells a story of one activity after another sewn together – a quilt of caring, perhaps with some frayed edges and fading colors, but a quilt nonetheless. Maybe it is not a quilt, but a crocheted blankie – the kind with holes in it. Those holes are the many haunting questions never answered by doctors or social workers or family, and those few quiet moments in which I could only sit and breathe because I am too exhausted to do much else.

I would like it to be a New Year, full of new hopes, a restored sense of purpose, and a song to sing, but dementia is sometimes (though they insist otherwise) a contagious disease, and I have forgotten things. It is not that I am lost or hopeless. It's just that I am a tired caregiver; too tired, certainly, to stay up to watch the ball drop in Times Square.

For New Year, I ask for the calm of a peaceful night (and the ability to sleep when I get it). For New Year I hope I am humble enough that the next person who offers to help out, I do not pass off politely, but tender a small request worthy of their interest. Beginning in January, I hope to find a massage, so I can enjoy the blessing of human touch aimed at calming my mind and heart (and believe that I am worth receiving it). As January rolls into February and March, I petition the heavens that I might relish the dance of time, even though I fully understand it brings death for my loved one. I am,

after all, not dying myself, but in fact, being taught how to live.

When we teach Savvy Caregiver, I realize we put out on the table appetizers, hors d'oeuvres, to feed better caregiving. But it is difficult to remember to keep feeding yourself day after day when your concern is feeding another. Enjoy eating again. Every caregiver I have met in my journey makes North Central Florida a better place to be, and I am the better for having gotten to know you. Let's continue to feed one another in this New Year, so that we become each other's genuine markers of time well spent. Write and tell me about your New Year hopes and dreams.

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## Upcoming Savvy Caregiver Trainings

Savvy Caregiver Training is a six-session training dedicated to people who care for family members and friends with dementias (like Alzheimer's). Our goal is to reduce your stress by offering you easy-to-understand information about progressive dementias, related medicines, and diagnostic tools. It is our goal to build skills on relating to persons of dementia when they behave in ways that baffle, embarrass or irritate you and others.

Choose whichever series works for your schedule and call Tom Rinkoski at (352) 378-6649, ext. 126 to register. Or e-mail him at [rinkoskit@agingresources.org](mailto:rinkoskit@agingresources.org).

Tuesdays; 1:30 – 3:30 pm, begins January 13, 2015 at Hospice of Nature Coast in Palatka

Tuesdays; 2:00 – 4:00 pm, begins February 3, 2014 at Top of The World in Ocala

Thursdays; 1:00 – 3:00 pm, begins February 5 at Alachua County Health Department in Gainesville.

Tuesdays; 1:00 – 3:00 pm, begins February 24, 2015 at Life Style Enrichment Center, in Lake City

More dates of upcoming Savvy Caregiver Trainings can be found at our Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/SavvyCaregiverNorthCentralFlorida>) or Web Page ([www.agingresources.org](http://www.agingresources.org)).

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## Employee Qualifications for In-Home Care Agencies

By Sally Dahlem

One of the advantages of in-home care is the security that comes along with a well-qualified caregiver. In-home care employees must meet certain requirements before they can work for an agency.

Each person seeking to work for an in-home care agency must be declared eligible by the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). The AHCA conducts a level-two background check on all applicants. The level-two background check compares the applicant's fingerprints to state and national databases in search of disqualifying offenses. This background check is designated by a law specifically designed to take a closer look at people applying for positions of responsibility or trust. If the applicant does have a disqualifying offense, the AHCA would notify the agency.

Someone who has applied to work for an in-home care agency must also have a current CPR

certification. He or she must complete both an HIV course before beginning work and an Alzheimer's course within the first nine months. If the applicant is a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), his or her license must also be up to date.

With these standards in place, you can be sure that an in-home care worker you obtain through an agency has the necessary experience and qualifications to properly take care of your elderly family member.

*Sally Dahlem is a partner at Home by Choice, which provides private-duty homemaker services. She and her business partner, John Markham, have more than 35 years of experience in home health-care, assisted living, long-term care and the medical equipment industries.*

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## Caregiver Support Groups

Alz Place/Harbor Chase  
3rd Thursday of the month at 9am  
Open to all caregivers  
Contact Robyn at 352-375-3000 for address

Alterra Clare Bridge  
3rd Thursday of the month- 6pm  
4607 NW 53rd Ave, Gainesville, FL 32653  
Contact Gail at 376-5151

The Cancer Center at NFRMC  
Heart of Healing Support Group/Meditation  
Tuesdays 12-12:30pm  
Call Joanie at 386-853-0162

Community Cancer Center  
Living With Cancer Supports  
www.cccnf.com for more information

Community Cancer Center  
Lake City Support Group  
2nd Wednesday every month 11am - 1pm  
4520 W.US Hwy. 90, Lake City, FL 32055 For more  
information call 386-755-0601

Haven Hospice  
Bereavement Supports  
Call 692-5123 for more information

Hospice of the Nature Coast  
Wings Community Education Center  
Grief Support Group- High Springs  
Call 386-454-1338 for more information

Lake Area Caregiver Support Group  
4th Tuesday of the month from 1-2:00pm  
Trinity Episcopal Church  
204 SR 26, Melrose, FL 32666  
Call 352-475-3792 for more information  
Park of the Palms

2nd Monday at 2pm in the Library  
Contact: Gail Haynes RNC - 352-246-5601

Park Meadows Health and Rehab Center  
3250 SW 41 Pl, GV  
Call the Alz Helpline at 1-800-272-3900 for more  
information

Senior Healthcare Center at Springhill  
3rd Tuesday of the month- 2:30-4:00pm  
3720 NW 83rd Street, Gainesville, FL 32606  
Contact Flory at 336-3050

NF Mind Matters Stroke Support Group  
4th Thursday of the month from 1-2 pm  
South Tower, 4th floor Conference Room-NFRMC  
Call 1-800-611-6913 for more information

The Village  
(for Village residents only)  
2nd Monday of the month from 1-2:30 pm  
8000 NW 27th Blvd., Gainesville, FL 32606  
Call 872-5332 for more information

United Church of Gainesville  
1624 NW 5th Ave, GV  
3rd Tuesday of the month from 7-8pm  
Open to caregivers of persons with dementia  
Contact Lynda at 352-219-3023

## Useful Resources

Seniors vs. Crime: [www.seniorsvscrime.com](http://www.seniorsvscrime.com)

Alzheimer's Association – [www.alz.org/cnfl/index.asp](http://www.alz.org/cnfl/index.asp)

Elder Affairs – [www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us/index.php](http://www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us/index.php)

SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) [www.floridashine.org](http://www.floridashine.org)

Medicare – [www.medicare.org](http://www.medicare.org)

State of Florida – [www.myflorida.com](http://www.myflorida.com)

National Institute on Aging (free publications) – [www.nig.nih.gov](http://www.nig.nih.gov)

Caregiving – [www.rosalynncarter.org](http://www.rosalynncarter.org)

Driving – [www.thehartford.com/talkwitholderdrivers/driversatrisk.htm](http://www.thehartford.com/talkwitholderdrivers/driversatrisk.htm)

United Way – Alachua, Bradford & Putnam counties – [www.unitedwaycnfl.org](http://www.unitedwaycnfl.org)

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Management - [www.caremanager.org](http://www.caremanager.org)