

In Memory of Cheryl Robinson

Cheryl Robinson officially had the title of editorial advisor for the Caregiver Chronicle but that was a misnomer. Cheryl was the heart and soul of this publication. We lost Cheryl just before Christmas after her almost-two-year battle with cancer.

I first met Cheryl professionally when my parents moved to Gainesville almost two decades ago and started going to the Senior Healthcare Center at Crown Pointe, where Cheryl was a case worker, for their primary medical needs. She was a tremen-

dous support for my parents and me as we dealt with the medical issues and caregiving needs associated with their aging. And she was there for me when they both passed away.

A few years after my father's passing, Cheryl asked me to help her create and produce the *Caregiver Chronicle*. She saw it as a way to help caregivers travel down this uncertain and unknown path. There was never any question about whether we would help. Now, because of her inspiration this publication has



grown into a vital tool for family caregivers in our community.

Although Cheryl was struggling for almost two years with her own health issues, she

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CAREGIVER CHRONICLE

Connections for Caregivers

January/February 2018

Nykyta Lowery: Working It and Living It



Nykyta (right), with her mother, Warda Thames-Lowery and grandfather, Sherman Cooper.

By David Greenberg

It's not uncommon to hear about people working in the senior-health community and at the same time, dealing with a family member for whom they are a caregiver. What is uncommon is for that person to go into the field professionally after learning about it first-hand as a family caregiver.

That's what makes Nykyta Lowery unique.

Back in 2013, Nykyta went to pick up her grandfather, Sherman Cooper, and she immediately knew there was something wrong because he was hav-

ing some appearance issues about which he was not even aware.

These changes continued into 2014 – missing doctor appointments, misplacing his wallet, accidents on his bike.

During a doctor appointment, Nykyta, her mother, Warda Thames-Lowery, and brothers heard the expected but dreaded news. After giving her father an Alzheimer's test, his doctor confirmed Sherman was suffering from dementia.

"I was about to cry," said Nykyta. "But we gathered around him and told him we would all be there to help. Four months later,

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he couldn't even remember my name."

This was a sudden change for Nykyta and her family. Sherman Cooper had been a vital, active person. He worked in Gainesville in the construction industry – helping to build Kanapaha Middle School, Parkland Nursing Home and several buildings around Shands and UF.

Today, he lives with his daughter, granddaughter (Nykyta) and her brothers because he needs care almost round the clock. Among the several issues they deal with, he has ambulatory problems, is partially blind and they need to soften his food before he can eat.

Recently, he gave them a serious scare.

"One day, he just wasn't moving or talking," she said. "His mouth was open, and he was not responsive. Fortunately, he was breathing."

It was diagnosed as TIAs, not uncommon among people with dementia.

"Just the other day, he told us about these hallucinations," she said. "He was pointing and shaking his fist at these bodies that were flying around his head. It's funny and sad at the same time. You can't do anything about it but be there for him."

So with that home life as a background, Nykyta made a very unusual career decision in November 2016. She was working at Lucky's Market at a job she said was not going very well and decided to make a change.

"I saw that Harbor Chase was looking to fill a position called a care partner," she said. "I was doing it at home. I thought why not? I applied and got the job. I've been told I'm a glutton for punishment."

At Harbor Chase, her job includes med-tech support, bringing medicine to residents, laundry, assisting with showers and toileting.

"I do about everything that needs doing," she said. "If I could work in the memory care area,

I would. There are good days and bad. But I love it, although I have to be honest, it's a hard job – physically and emotionally."

Nykyta says she has made some friends among the residents at Harbor Chase.

"There's a woman who tells me I sang with her when she used to work in the theater in Ocala," she said. "I never sang in the theater in Ocala. But now she sings to me, and I sing with her."

Then there's the woman she was recently putting to bed in the memory care area, where there was apparently a disproportionate number of men.

"She's a Southern belle," Nykyta said. "One night she asked where all the women were. I told her she would see them tomorrow. She gave me a big hug and went to bed."

So Nykyta Lowery is that unique person – working it and living it. And she does it with a mix of tears and smiles. And most important, she looks forward to every day because she believes every day is a gift for her. But in reality, every day – thanks to her – is a gift for her grandfather and the people she helps at Harbor Chase.


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and her vision

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

Tax Reform is Law. What's the Impact for Seniors?

By Sam W. Boone, Jr.

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.

After months of discussion, debate and lobbying, a new tax law was passed by Congress and signed by the President in late December. While some people see the new law as a boon for our economy, others are concerned.

One thing is certain. The new law will change the way many people prepare their taxes – especially seniors.

Among the highlights of the tax overhaul legislation are drops in the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent. It also eliminates personal exemptions and sets seven tax brackets, with the top one set at 37 percent. Standard deductions are nearly doubled to \$12,000 for individuals and \$24,000 for married couples filing jointly. However, the changes to individual tax rates would end after 2025, while the corporate tax break is permanent.

That means while we may see lower taxes in the short term, it is expected those tax breaks could disappear by the time the individual rates expire.

An analysis by Congress' nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation determined the new law would lower taxes for most Americans in 2018, and wealthier households are expected to see larger gains. The same analysis indicates that when individual cuts expire, many taxpayers could actually end up paying higher taxes.

Tax bills may actually be higher next year because of new limits on deductions related to state and local taxes home mortgage interest.

Lobbying by groups like AARP saved some provisions that benefit our senior population,

including the extra standard deduction for those age 65 and older and the medical expense deduction, which allows filers to deduct medical expenses exceeding 7.5 percent of their income in 2017 and 2018.

However, it appears likely millions of older Americans will face higher health care premium costs under the legislation. The law repeals the Affordable Care Act provision requiring most Americans to have health insurance starting in 2019. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that could lead to 13 million more people not having insurance by 2027. And with fewer individuals in



the health insurance pool, premiums in the individual marketplace would jump 10 percent in most years, according to the CBO. People between 50 and 64 would be hit hardest. Premiums could rise to as much as \$1,500 in

2019, according to AARP.

There's another provision of the law that creates a so-called chained consumer price index (CPI) that the government can use to determine inflation in relation to the tax code. This new CPI measures inflation at a slower rate than current methodology.

While Social Security benefits are not part of this plan, there is concern by senior advocates that Congress could decide later to base future Social Security cost of living adjustments (COLAs) on the chained CPI, meaning annual increases would likely be smaller.

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 and is accredited by the Veterans Administration. To learn more about elder-law issues, go online to [www. http://boonelaw.com](http://boonelaw.com), or call (352)-374-8308.

Savvy Caregiver Training

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

Here is a sampling of our upcoming schedule. Choose whichever series works for your schedule and call Johnnie Jones at jonesj@agingresources.org or 352-692-5277 to register.

JANUARY

01/11 Thursdays 1:30 – 3:30 pm Lifestyle Enrichment Center, Lake City

FEBRUARY

02/06 Tuesdays 2:00 – 4:00 pm Hospice of Marion County, Ocala
 02/07 Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:00 pm Serenades ALF, The Villages
 02/07 Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:00 pm Jo Kennon Public Library, Dowling Park

MARCH

03/05 Mondays 1:00 – 3:00 pm Haven Hospice, Chiefland
 03/07 Wednesdays 10:00 am – 12 noon Live Oak Library, Live Oak

More dates of upcoming Savvy Caregiver Trainings can be found at our Web Page (<http://www.agingresources.org/savvy-caregiver-for-families>). Or, go to our Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/Savvy-Caregiver-Training-131134764247962>) for other information, tips and techniques about caregiving and dementia.



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Your Most Important Role

Editor's Note: This article is divided into two parts. The second half will appear in the March-April issue of the Caregiver Chronicle.

By Johnnie Jones III

Caregiver is the most important of all the roles that you play in the life of your care recipient. This is not just a shift in duties but it is an outlook and attitude change. It is often a struggle for caregivers to remember that the last role that they took on should be the first to respond to the person for whom they are caring. Those who work as family caregivers on a daily basis know that the job includes the responsibilities of nurse, counselor, dietician, activities director, business manager, physical and occupational therapist among others. The caregiver has to nimbly shift from one to the other and sometimes must be all of those things to their person at once. With all of the new responsibilities that the family caregiver now has, what happens to those that you held before? Prior to being a caregiver you were a spouse, child, sibling or friend. You were a peer,

partner and coequal to a strong, organized, independent and healthy person.

Your caregiving journey probably did not begin when you first noticed symptoms or even when your care recipient received the initial diagnosis. Most likely you took on this most recent and important role on the day that you first self-identified as a caregiver. When that happened all other versions of you stepped behind the caregiver who became the ring master in the daily circus that is your life. Paid professional caregivers are expected to maintain clinical boundaries. Your new outlook dictates that family caregivers, in their clinical role, should do the same. It is now your job to compassionately render care to your person without letting the emotions and baggage that may come with your previous relationship to your person hinder you from effectively giving care. It may be difficult to assist a spouse with toileting for the first time.

Johnnie Jones III is the Caregiver Support Coordinator for Elder Options/Savvy Caregiver Training Program.

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Veteran Benefits

If you are a veteran or widow of a veteran please note that you may be eligible for benefits under the Veteran's Administration. These benefits may be able to help with the cost of additional care in the home or assisted living facility. There are income and asset eligibility criteria to be met. However rules of financial benefits can change at any time so it is important to speak with a Veteran Service Officer. It helps to have discharge papers available. Locally, the Alachua County Veteran Service office holds free workshops for those interested in applying. On Tuesdays there is a Pension Workshop and a Compensation Workshop on Wednesdays. On Thursdays there is a General Informational Workshop. For more details about these, please contact the Alachua County Veteran Service Office at 264-6740.

Community Coalition for Older Adults

Second Friday of the month, Senior Recreation Center, 5701 NW 34 St.
Contact Shirley Bloodworth at
sgblood@bellsouth.net for
information.

Cheryl (continued from p. 1)

remained involved as the passion, inspiration and the editorial voice of this publication. With that in mind, the *Caregiver Chronicle* will carry on. I believe she would be very upset if she knew that her passing meant the end of this newsletter. So we will publish in 2018, and we dedicate this year's *Caregiver Chronicles* to her memory. Cheryl was an inspiration to us all, and she will be greatly missed.

David Greenberg

This is Your Newsletter

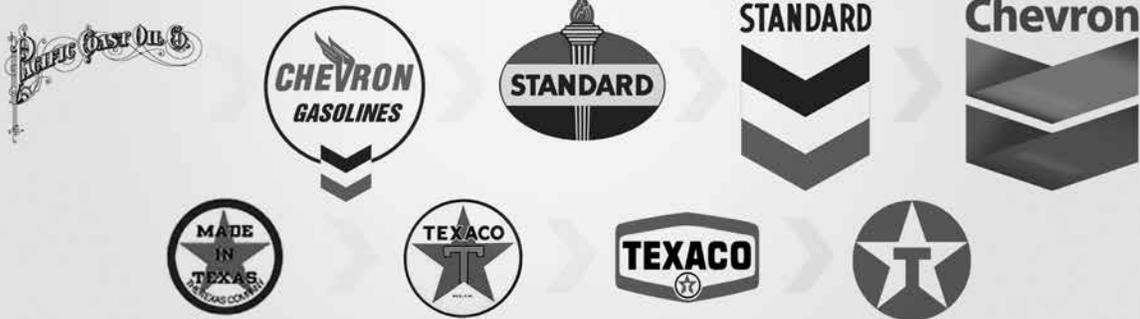
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We will publish every other month around the
15th, January, March, May, July,
September and November.

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Tips for Staying Healthy and Happy in These Winter Months

By Ruth Brunner

With the cold weather which has really affected everyone here in North Florida recently, it is a great time to think about ways to remain healthy during these winter months. Below are two tips to consider for this time of year.

Eat Healthy

Many people spend more time indoors during the winter. Because of that, it can be challenging to eat a healthy diet. Find foods rich in Vitamin D and C. Vitamin D deficiency can cause fatigue, bone pain and depression. Be sure to eat food fortified with Vitamin D, such as grains, yogurt, cereal, cheese, salmon, and drink your milk. A Vitamin C deficiency can cause muscle pain, skin rashes and bruising. Look for pome-

granates, cranberries, citrus fruits and root vegetables.

Be Happy!

It can be easy to become isolated during the colder months. This can lead to depression. To combat seasonal loneliness, consider taking up a new hobby, enroll in an exercise class, call a friend or visit a senior living community. For anyone residing in Alachua County, call or contact the Senior Recreation Center located at 5701 NW 34th Boulevard (352-265-9040) to find out about their enriching and enjoyable programs for seniors.

Ruth Brunner is the Sales Director for The Windsor of Gainesville.

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10 Locations Throughout Florida!

Caregiver Support Groups

Alz Place

3rd Thursday of the month at 9am
Open to all caregivers
1610 NW 23rd Ave.. Gainesville
Contact Nancy at 352-265-9200

Alzheimer's Association

Caregiver Support Group
2nd Thursday of each month - 1:30 p.m.
Edward Jones conference room,
220 North Main Street, Suite 2, Chiefland
Contact Kathryn at 352-493-4949

Cancer Center at NFRMC

Breast Cancer Support Group
2nd Tuesday of the month - 6pm - 7:30 pm
Call Susie at 352-213-5890

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 Marion County

Transitions Caregiver Support Group
Usually the 2nd Tuesday of each month 11am - 1 pm
The Elliott Center, 3231 SW 34th Ave. Ocala
Call for information 352-854-5200

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 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 Thursday of the month from 1:30-3 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

VA Caregiver Support

Mon-Fri- 8am- 11pm, Sat. 10:30-6pm
Call 1-855-260-3274

Useful Resources

Seniors vs. Crime: www.seniorsvscrime.com
Alzheimer's Association – www.alz.org/cnfl/index.asp
Doggie Styles: Mobile Pet Grooming – www.doggiestyles.org
Elder Affairs – www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us/index.php
Elder Helpline – 1-800-963-5337, options@agingresources.org
Elder Options – Savvy Caregiver Classes – www.agingresources.org
Florida Silver Alert – www.floridasilveralert.com
SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders) www.floridashine.org
Driving – www.independencedrive.phhp.ufl.edu
Medicare – www.medicare.org
State of Florida – www.myflorida.com
National Institute on Aging (free publications) – www.nig.nih.gov
United Way – Alachua, Bradford & Putnam counties – www.unitedwayncfl.org
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Management – www.caremanager.org
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – www.va.gov