

CAREGIVER CHRONICLE

Connections for Caregivers

Making the Decision: Assisted Living Facility or Nursing Home – When and Which?

By Damaris Lopez

Deciding when your loved ones need to move from home to another living situation is extremely challenging. Equally difficult is finding the right setting for them. Generally, depending on the level

of care they need, you are looking at choosing between an assisted living facility and a nursing home.

Of course the first option is to have them stay at home for as long as it is the best and safest alternative.

In order to keep that op-

tion viable for as long as possible, it is likely you are going to have to look at bringing professional caregivers in before it becomes too overwhelming for family members.

“Staying home as long as possible is the best option,” said Sally Dahlem, co-owner of Home by Choice, a locally owned home healthcare agency. “If you can bring in a professional caregiver to help with housekeeping, taking them to appointments, helping with basic hygiene needs and providing reminders about medicine that’s the first step.”

An additional benefit of that step is that when it comes time to move – either to an assisted living facility or nursing home, the caregiver can go with them. That helps make the transition much easier.

“We regularly go in to assisted living facilities or nursing homes to continue to help our clients with things like feeding, dressing and some of the same things we did when they were at home.”

So when the time does come to move your loved one, how do you know what’s right. The best way is to look at the ser-

(continued on next page)

A Message From Cheryl Robinson

This issue of the Caregiver Chronicle is chock full of information with many FAQs addressed.

For example, how do we know when it might be the right time to consider placement for our family member and what is the difference between an assisted living facility and a nursing home.

Tom Rinkoski addresses a very important factor in this decision regarding how we cope with our own feelings about this decision as well as how to best support our family member having to make the change.

Sam Boone talks about protecting seniors from financial abuse and a new program called ElderSmart\$, supported by the Florida Bar and presented by Elder Law attorneys.

David Huckabee talks of the importance of early detection of dementia.

We wrap it up with some very good advice on the use of meditation. Now this actually comes from some personal experience as Sally Dahlem of Home by Choice and I are currently taking a weekly qigong class which focuses on stress reduction and breathing. What a difference this has made.

Please enjoy this issue of the Caregiver Chronicle, and I hope it provides some important and helpful information.

Take good care!
Cheryl Robinson, LCSW



Making the Decision

(continued from previous page)

vices provided in each situation and make an honest assessment of what is best.

An assisted living facility is best for seniors who may not be able to live completely alone, but do not require high-level care. Assistance in these kinds of homes generally deals with medication, meals and housekeeping. Most communities also provide transportation and social activities for entertainment. Additionally, some assisted living facilities also have units available for those who have Alzheimer's disease.

Lindsay Willis, the executive director at HarborChase of Gainesville, says you need to be looking at the quality of life at home.

"We often tell people to look at three things – socialization, safety and care," she said. "If they are starting to wander, or if they are just home watching TV, those are problems. And it will become more and more difficult for the caregiver. As far as socialization, while we want them at home as long as possible, they may need more stimulation. Lack of stimulation impacts sleep and appetite, leading to other problems. If you see these signs, it may be time for more of a community setting."

If the need is greater than that, it may be time to look at a nursing home when seniors are in need of more constant help and high-level medical care.

"At a skilled nursing facility, they have a skilled nurse present 24 hours a day," said Kala Fuhrmann, the administrator at Palm Garden of Gainesville. "If they no longer have the ability to take care of themselves, then this is an appropriate setting. If they can no longer do the activities of daily

living – dress, use the bathroom, feed themselves, get from one chair to another – it is likely time for a skilled nursing facility."

Ultimately this challenging decision belongs with the family. Talk to people you trust, visit any facilities you are considering and learn about their services before making any decision. Determine if the setting is right for your loved one and whether they will be happy and comfortable there. But if you are thinking about these issues, it is important to act soon. Waiting may put you in the position of having to make a decision while in crisis, and that's not good for anyone.

Elder Law Month

May is Elder Law Month. As part of the Law in the Library Series, Sam Boone will be speaking at the Millhopper Branch Library on elder law issues on May 16 at 6 p.m. Attendance is free.



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Caregiver Chronicle is published every other month

Published and produced by
Greenberg Communications
www.greenbergcommunications.com
Editorial Advisor: Cheryl Robinson, L.C.S.W.

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Like the page to get notices about events and activities between our print issues.

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

ElderSmart: Helping to Keep Seniors From Being Victims

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.

An alarming number of seniors become the victims of financial abuse. In fact, a recent study estimated that the elderly are swindled out of close to \$3 billion a year. An additional study showed that 1 in 5 seniors have been the victim of a financial scam.

Those are clearly figures about which something has to be done, and Florida has started to take steps to change them.

Spearheaded by the Academy of Florida Elder Law Attorneys (AFELA) and the Elder Law Section of the Florida Bar, ElderSmart is an educational program being promoted by Elder Law attorneys in the state for seniors, their caregivers and anyone else who can help prevent our seniors from becoming victims of these financial scams. It all starts with budgeting, and that often becomes more challenging with age. But the better you or your trusted loved ones understand what's going on with your money, the safer you are. So no matter how old you are, it is important to reconcile your bank statements monthly. If this task has become too complicated, then it is time to turn it over to someone you trust. But it's critical that it does not stop.

Here are a few other things to consider with budgeting. Keep a spending diary and hold on to receipts. For fixed expenses set up automatic bill payments. Try to set aside some money each month for savings and try to plan ahead for future expenses.

However that's just the first step. Our seniors are targeted for mortgage scams, predatory

lending and reverse mortgages. Among the predatory lending programs out there are foreclosure rescue, lease/buy back, non-traditional lending products and deceptive loan servicing.

Additionally you should watch out for utility or home-improvement scams. With any kind of contractor the first thing you want to know is if they are licensed and insured. You



need to watch out for those who solicit door-to-door, or pressure you to sign a contract and ask for cash or a check made out to an individual rather than a company.

So with ElderSmart we suggest you be S.M.A.A.R.T. Stop! Take

time to think through any financial decisions you make. Make decisions on your own time. Avoid businesses that contact you directly. Ask questions about any financial deal you make. Research your options before making decisions. Talk to people you trust before making a financial decision.

It is confusing, and you need to understand that if you are part of the elder population you are being targeted by these predators. Elder Law attorneys, like myself, are prepared to meet with caregiver and elder groups to explain how to prevent being the victim of financial scam.

And it starts with rule one: If it sounds too good to be true, it likely is.

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.

How Do I Know If It's Alzheimer's Disease?

By David Huckabee

At the Alzheimer's Association, our staff and volunteers get this question on a daily basis. Unfortunately, even as trained professionals in the field of dementia and even if we ask all the right questions, there is no way to make an accurate diagnosis of what is causing a person's dementia based on one conversation. Nor can anyone arrive at a complete diagnosis as a result of a memory screening, although that can be a good starting point.

The good news is that doctors can arrive at a high degree of certainty regarding the diagnosis after a series of tests. The specific evaluations given will depend on the symptoms experienced, the patient's medical history, and the result of previous testing. These tests may include blood work, X-rays, psychological evaluation, MRIs, cardiovascular testing, and/or PET scans. The purpose of each test is to determine what may be causing the symptoms and just as importantly, to rule out possible causes.

Many different diseases and conditions cause symptoms that mirror those of Alzheimer's disease. Some of these diseases are like Alzheimer's disease in that we have not yet discovered a cure. However, other conditions such as a vitamin deficiency, infection, or depression may have a cure or a treatment

that reduces/eliminates symptoms.

This is one reason we at the Alzheimer's Association stress the importance of early testing and detection. If there is a chance that someone's memory loss and confusion can be effectively treated with a vitamin supplement, medication, or lifestyle changes, then we certainly want to know about it.

Too often of course, the diagnosis is a case of probable Alzheimer's disease. But even then, early detection is important as it allows the individual to participate in a greater range of treatment options as well as allowing the patient to better plan his or her future.

If you have questions regarding the symptoms of early stage Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, I encourage you to visit our website at alz.org. We also present a free educational program titled "10 Warning Signs: The Importance of Early Detection" which should help answer many of your questions. If you want to attend one of these classes or to schedule a group presentation, please contact us 24 hours a day/7 days a week at (800) 272-3900.

David Huckabee is the Associate Director of Programs for the North Central Florida Regional Office of the Alzheimer's Association.



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But, I Promised!

By Tom Rinkoski,
Caregiver Coach at Elder Options

I believe the most difficult part of making the decision to find an appropriate residence for the person you are caring for is not necessarily whether it is a skilled nursing (SNF) or assisted living facility (ALF); but dealing with the emotional issues that come with that placement. In a fashion, these institutions will tell you in their intake assessments, which of them will best meet the needs of your person.

For the person making the journey, they have to deal with their own psychological and emotional images of what such a transfer means. We can take them there and show them the actual place, but that is really not the reality they are dealing with. Most contemporary ALFs are good places offering activities and beautiful surroundings, but these are difficult to see when the person in need of such assistance has constructed an interior dungeon. In making a move to either, they suffer a loss of many things they hold dear, perhaps even a sense of abandonment. In the name of patient safety residents sacrifice the independence they took a lifetime to build. They are sacrificing the rights to make choices on their own behalf (especially, if they are going to a SNF). Even if the person is in the midst of a well-advanced dementia, their emotional self still is battling feelings, but without the cognitive skills to parse them. This emotional battle is what makes the decision difficult, confusing and terrifying. As caregivers, we need to prepare ourselves to speak to these fears and losses.

The caregiver has to face the burden of the promises they made never to place their loved one in a “nursing home” which is not so much an actual place as a euphemism for loss of dignity. We hold over our heads these promises – *I promised I would always be there for you; I promised you would die among family* – even in the midst of our exhaustion and frustration. This emotional horizon weighs on our consciousness each day as the disease slowly takes away our abilities to offer appropriate and timely care for the ever-changing needs of our loved one. And usually, as the horizon rolls in closer our stress increases, and we are less capable (as a result) of speaking to these emotional issues.

I am not denying that there are proper reasons for placement in either an ALF or SNF. And there are many ways in which to make that transfer effective. But first among them is to effectively deal with our own feelings of transgression of promises and sacred trust as well as the feelings of the person moving. These are intensely personal issues that may demand the assistance of a therapist; certainly it would be helpful to participate in a support group. Be prepared in *all* ways.

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.

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Upcoming Savvy Caregiver Trainings

Savvy Caregiver Training is an education program for dementia caregivers. The goal is to lessen caregiver stress by providing easy-to-understand information about the diseases that cause dementia, medications and its progression. In addition, we help caregivers to learn behavior management skills to properly address negative dementia interactions. Choose the training that is nearest your location.

- Lake City, Florida at the Life Style Enrichment Center, Mondays from 1:00 – 3:00 pm, starting June 6, 2016. Six Week format. Led By Lauren Dean of the Savvy Team.
- Gainesville, Florida at Haven Hospice (The E.T. York Center). Thursdays from 1:00 – 3:00 pm starting June 23, 2016. Six Week format. Led by Ana Robles-Rhoads.
- Ocala, Florida at Marion County Senior Services; Tuesdays from 2:00 – 4:00 pm starting July 12, 2016. Led by Tom Rinkoski.
- The Villages, Florida at Lexington Place ALF; Tuesdays 1:00 – 3:00 pm, Starting July 12, 2016. Seven Week format. Led by Tom Rinkoski.
- Live Oak, Florida at Suwanee River Regional Library. Wednesdays from 10:00 am – 12:00 Noon, starting July 27, 2016. Six week format. Led by Lauren Dean.
- Chiefland, Florida at Hospice of Citrus and The Nature Coast. Thursdays from 1:00 – 3:00 pm, starting August 18, 2016. Six week format. Led by Ana Robles-Rhoads.
- Starke, Florida at Bradford County Senior Center. Wednesdays from 1:00 – 3:00 pm, starting September 14, 2016. Six week format. Led by Lauren Dean

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/SavvyCaregiverNorthCentralFlorida>) for other information, tips and techniques about caregiving and dementia.

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Relaxation Techniques for Seniors

By Sally Dahlem

We all need to take the time to relax from stressors in our daily lives. Seniors need to take the time to focus on relaxation throughout the day to remain happy and upbeat. There are many easy and simple relaxation techniques that will allow you to maintain a peaceful state of mind.

Practicing deep breathing exercises is extremely quick but can have lasting effects for the entire day. To practice deep breathing techniques, take a big breath in through your nose and then let it out through your mouth. You can repeat these steps as many times as you need. After practicing deep breathing exercises a few times you will definitely feel calm and serene. You can also add arms to your breathing exercise. Bring your arms up in a sweep motion as you inhale and down as you exhale.

Meditation is also extremely relaxing.

Spend some time in a quiet and dark room and attempt to clear your mind of all thoughts. It helps if you can lie down while meditating. While meditating it is also important to relax your muscles, especially any muscles that might be particularly tense.

These relaxation techniques will ensure you have a calm and peaceful day. Though we all have busy lives, taking the time to take cleansing breaths and meditate for just a few minutes every day can have long lasting benefits for your health and well being.

Sally Dahlem is a partner at Home by Choice, which provides private-duty homecare 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

Al'z 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 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

Elder Affairs – www.elderaffairs.state.fl.us/index.php

Elder Helpline – 1-800-963-5337, email@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.unitedwaycnfl.org

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Management – www.caremanager.org

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – www.va.gov