

The Caregiver's Advocate

December 2011

Faces of Caregivers In Georgia



Joy Elder receives Georgia Volunteer Caregiver of the Year Award from Mrs. Rosalynn Carter

As the general population's average age increases, the importance of caregivers becomes progressively more critical to society.

Georgia Southwestern State University's Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving (RCI) and the former First Lady herself honored those who serve as caregivers in Georgia and around the nation at the annual RCI Summit Gala Thursday, Oct. 6 at Georgia Southwestern.

In particular, Watkinsville, GA. native, Joy Elder, was selected as the 2011 Georgia Volunteer Caregiver of the Year. Nominated by Patsy Massey, volunteer services coordinator of St. Mary's Hospice, Elder has been a hospice volunteer since 1998. Humbled to receive this award, she takes pleasure in helping others.

"I thrive on and find great joy in being able to use my talents, skills, educational background, and resources to help others." Elder said. "I learned the importance of giving back from the example my parents set in my childhood in rural Oconee County, Georgia. Family, neighbors, fellow church members, and people in our community reached out to each other offering time, food, working strength, and compassion in times of need - never thinking about having the favor returned."

In 13 years of service, Elder has provided care and companionship for many families, including a 20-month assignment with a man suffering from Alzheimer's disease. One of Elder's own family members was later impacted by this illness.

Research shows that caregivers experience chronic conditions at nearly twice the rate of non-caregivers. The state's demographic trends reflect a similar pattern. Statistics on aging from 2010 show that Georgia has the ninth fastest growing 60+ population and the eighteenth fastest growing 85+ population in America.

Johnson and Johnson, Inc. sponsor the RCI Summit and the Gala Awards Banquet each year. Georgia Southwestern's Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving was created in 1987 in honor of former First Lady and GSW alumna Rosalynn Carter. Through research, education, and training, the RCI promotes the mental health and well being of individuals, families, and professional caregivers; encourages effective caregiving practices; builds public awareness of caregiving needs; and advances public and social policies that enhance caring communities.

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Message from the Director
Dr. Leisa Easom
Executive Director - RCI

Advocacy for Caregivers

Advocacy can be defined as giving aid to cause or speaking on behalf of those who do not or cannot speak for themselves. While we all work hard to empower our caregivers and care recipients, we have opportunities at the local, state, and national level to be an advocate for all caregivers and the ones for whom they care. Recently I had two national advocacy opportunities. I served on two national panels:

1) the Veterans Administration Caregiving Support

Panel which was convened in Washington, D.C. on October 31, 2011; and 2) U.S. Administration on Aging advisory panel focused on "Accelerating Adoption of Assistive Technology to Reduce Physical Strain."

Among Family Caregivers of the Chronically Disabled Elderly Living at Home", which was convened in Falls Church, VA, on December 6, 2011. At each of the panel discussions, I shared about the needed supports for family and professional caregivers. As a group, we talked about the burden and stress of caregivers and how long-term funding streams are needed to support caregivers in their valuable roles. Local churches and civic organizations in your area are always looking for someone to present at meetings. Your state legislator is interested in the area he/she represents and may need to be informed on how best to support caregivers. As we move into 2012, I encourage you to look for opportunities in your local and state areas to speak on the behalf of caregivers.

Holiday Tips for Caregivers



1. Change traditions. Don't get locked into the pressure of recreating the past perfect holiday. Focus on simple activities that bring people together without all the fuss. If you usually do the decorating and cooking, invite the family for a potluck decorating party.

2. Balance solitude with sociability. Solitude can renew strength. Being with people you care about can be equally important. Call that friend that always makes you laugh.

3. Set aside "letting go" time. Even if just for 15 minutes. It will surprise you how it helps.

4. Counter the conspiracy of silence. Because family and friends love you, they may think they are doing you a favor by not interrupting you. Reach out and let people know how they can connect with you this season.

5. Find a creative outlet. Take on small decorating tasks or write notes in Christmas cards to connect with those you have not had the time to see lately.

7. Utilize available resources. Let others help.

8. If your faith is important to you, participate in the holiday services or watch services on TV.

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Georgia CARE-NET Coalition

December 2011 Meeting

L to R: Standing: Janice Adams, Laura Bagwell, Kathy Keith, Janis Akin, Algertha Taylor, Connie Wilkes, Mary Lou Vergara, Ken Jasnau, Michele Kelly, Gary Gordon, Mary Whitfield, Mona Browning, Gayle Alston, Gloria Sanford.

Seated: Ada Brown, Leisa Easom

Procedures for Applying for 501 (c) 3 status Highlight December Coalition Meeting

The December meeting of the Georgia Caregiver Coalition was well attended with ten of the twelve CARE-NETs present. Dr. Easom began the meeting with updates including the work RCI is conducting at State, National, and International levels. Gayle Alston shared information regarding the evidence based implementation of caregiver interventions around the state. She stated preliminary results indicate Area Agencies on Aging are successfully meeting the goals of their projects.

A discussion on the new initiative at Phoebe Sumter Medical Center (see page 3) revealed Care Transition programs are in the works in five Area Agencies on Aging who are partnering with local hospitals. The need to reduce readmissions has led to hospitals seeking community partners with expertise in this area. RCI sponsored a training by Dr. Eric Coleman on his evidence based Care Transitions intervention in Athens in 2008. This training planted the seeds leading to current projects initiating around the state.

Mr. Jeff Fucito, CPA with Mauldin & Jenkins, and Christopher Smith, Attorney at Law, provided the program detailing the procedures for achieving designation as a 501 (c) 3, non-profit agency. Three of the twelve CARE-NETs currently hold this designation. Dr. Easom and the CARE-NET representatives committed to pursuing the possibility of gaining this status for all regions. With the non-profit status, CARE-NETs will be able to receive tax deductible donations and compete for grant funded opportunities that are not currently available to them.

Each CARE-NET shared the activities of the past quarter and those planned for the future. Caregiver Celebrations and Educational events have been well attended and received excellent feedback from those who participated.

Dr. Easom expressed her appreciation of the work each of the regional CARE-NETs has accomplished. The Caregiver Events described were well planned and provided much needed information and support to the caregivers in their region.

RCI WISHES YOU AND YOURS A HAPPY AND SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON !

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Hospital Based Caregiver Support Center Gains Momentum

The Caregiver Support Center housed at Phoebe Sumter Medical Center in Americus will relocate to the new hospital facility in January. A new initiative of the Rosalynn Carter Institute, the center will be staffed by Pope Fellows and community volunteers. As certified Caregiver Coaches, these volunteers will provide information and support to family caregivers of people treated by Phoebe Sumter.

Having the right information when returning home from a hospital stay can make an important difference in patient outcomes. Caregivers will also receive tools and tips on self-care and community resources.

2012 Coalition Meeting Schedule

All Meetings will be held at :

**Methodist Children's Home
Macon, Ga.**

10:00 AM—2:00 PM

**Dates for the meetings are pending
Mrs. Carter's approval upon her
return from overseas.**

CARE-NET Calendar

Meeting dates first quarter 2012:

Atlanta Regional	Jan 18 at 3:00 PM
Central Savannah	Jan. 25 at 3:30
Coastal Georgia	Feb. 28 at 12:30
Ga. Mountains	Jan 11 at 3:15 PM
Heart of Georgia	Mar 13:
Middle Georgia	Jan 9 at 11:00 AM
Northeast Georgia	Mar 13 at 11:00 AM
Southern Crescent	Jan 9 at 11:00 AM
Southwest Georgia	March 16 at Noon
West Central Georgia	Jan 3 at 11:30 AM

For additional information you may contact the CARE-NET Coordinator for each region. Their contact information can be found at:

http://www.rosalynncarter.org/georgia_carenets/



Georgia CARE-NET Coalition Newsletter is a publication sponsored by the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving.

"The Advocate" is designed to support and promote the work of Georgia's 12 CARE-NET s.