



Van Wert, Ohio

TIMES BULLETIN

Serving Van Wert County since 1844

MEDIA

Part of the DHI Media group

Caregivers serve 'Around the Clock' People Make The Difference

Byron McNutt

Tuesday, November 5, 2019 7:23 PM

They are our country's unsung heroes. More than 90 million Americans improve the quality of life for loved ones who have chronic conditions, disabilities, disease or the frailties of old age. November is National Family Caregivers Month. This year's theme is appropriately "Caregiving Around the Clock."

The Caregiver Action Network (CAN) serves a broad spectrum of family caregivers, from the parents of children with special needs and the families of wounded soldiers to a young couple dealing with a diagnosis of MS and adult children caring for parents with Alzheimer's disease.

It is a time to recognize and honor family caregivers across the country. Caregiving can be a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week job. Providing care around the clock can crowd out other important areas of life, CAN tells us.

Caregivers travel a unique and winding road that is sometimes hard to understand unless you have traveled the same route yourself. While it can bring great joy to be able to care for a loved one in need, the journey itself presents distinctive concerns and issues for both the caregiver and the care recipient.

The average family caregiver is a working mother of school-aged children, according to CAN. Mornings become a tricky balancing act of getting the kids ready for school, making sure loved ones have what they need for the day and then getting themselves out the door for work.

Up to 70 percent of the time, the family caregiver manages the medications. The more serious the condition, the more likely this is true. This means ensuring the loved one is taking the medications correctly and keeping the medication list up-to-date.

CAN says six out of 10 family caregivers work full or part time. Some must cut back on working hours, take a leave of absence, or quit their job entirely. Evenings mean mealtime and nutrition decisions. Nutrition helps maintain strength, energy, stamina and a positive attitude.

If the caregiver is lucky, he or she can get a few minutes late at night for themselves to rest and recharge. It is vital for them to take a breather and re-energize. In many cases, the caregiver may be called on to provide additional care throughout the night.

Where do caregivers find resources and advice? It can come from family, friends and co-workers. Many of these people have been thru the experience. They are willing to trade stories, share ideas and offer techniques others have tried.

There are caregiver support groups. They can be both in-person and online support groups. They are a great source of information, support and stress relief.

Doctors, nurses and other health professionals are a great source of information. They are experts in their field and are connected with local medical and aging care communities. Don't hesitate to ask for their advice.

Just remember. You aren't alone and don't be afraid to reach out to religious organizations, volunteer groups, hospitals/clinics, Veterans Services Offices and the local Aging & Disability Resource Centers.

Monday is Veterans Day...a day when Americans recognize their active-duty military and veterans. It is also a great time to recognize their spouses, according to Sidney Goodfriend, founder and chairman of American Corporate Partners (ACP). He is also a retired investment banker.

There are more than 600,000 of them, of whom more than 90 percent are women, he says. They are 10 times as likely as civilians to move across state lines. A military family typically moves every two to three years. Their greatest challenge isn't packing, making new friends or getting kids in new schools, it's finding meaningful employment.

Unemployment, while near record lows nationally, is two to three times as high for civilian spouses of active-duty military, according to a 2017 study by Blue Star Families. And more than 35 percent of military spouses consider themselves underemployed.

Goodfriend says the problem isn't going away even as overseas wars wind down. Certifications and licenses rarely translate across state lines. Even when there are jobs, it isn't easy to get hired when the prospective employer expects you'll leave town in 18 months.

A good first step would be to ask public corporations to consider what they are doing for military spouses when they hire them. Is it possible for them to work remotely? Do multinationals have a plan to hire military spouses at overseas locations.

Elected officials could start by asking companies with robust government-affairs departments and lobbying efforts in Washington what they are doing to assist not only veterans but also military spouses. Employers ought to make it easier to keep jobs when families have to move.

At ACP, a nonprofit veteran mentoring program, they have assisted more than 13,000 veterans with the transition into new careers in the private sector over the last 10 years. Their goal is to assist 1,500 spouses in the next two years, Goodfriend writes.

As we honor Veterans this week, stop for a moment to focus on military spouses. It's the right thing to do, and it's an issue of national security. Too frequently senior service members retire not because they want to leave the military but because the toll on their families is too heavy.