

There is a variety in caregiver and participant relationships and we understand that the adjustment of transitioning from role of wife, daughter, husband, grandchild, son, friend to that of full-time caregiver, especially when sudden, can be a difficult one to navigate. We offer the tools, resources and support to help caregivers grow into this role.

Watching this evolution of the caregiver has influenced our approach to caregiver support. It is a subject that can be sensitive to broach and, as it is often accompanied by guilt and stress, we encourage our caregivers to discuss their needs and concerns. Many of our caregivers are themselves facing health challenges, or are still full time caregivers for their own children, while over 70% are still active members of the workforce.

It is our awareness of the challenges faced by our caregivers that allows us to focus on opportunities of support and outreach. From multiple support groups, and one-on-one counseling sessions, to educational opportunities and guest speakers addressing topical information, we offer education, guidance and caregiver tools across the spectrum of caregiver needs. It isn't just caregiving that you are adjusting to, but often the new demands and lifestyle changes that come with a diagnosis of dementia or Alzheimer's. Coupled with the awareness that your loved one has changed in a fundamental way, the sentiments of feeling alone, confused and overwhelmed are echoed time and time again from our caregivers.

Following are a few examples of the impact Circle Center has on families. James was a caregiver to his wife, Willie Avery, while she was a participant here for 10 years. James himself now attends the Center, allowing him to "age in place" at home with his daughter, Stephanie, and her family. Stephanie, like many caregivers, shares that a role of long-term caregiver is both rewarding and challenging. Something Stephanie has encountered is the sense of powerlessness. The progression of her parents' neurocognitive disorders was something that was out of her control, so having Circle Center serve as an extension of their home care and the knowledge that their needs were being met was something she could count on.

Circle Center caregivers' relationships extend beyond children and spouses. One example of this is Susan who has been a participant here for 3 years. She lives with her sister Anne, who like many of the caregivers we work with, find themselves unprepared for a role they never envisioned. Susan and Anne have both been welcomed into the Circle Center community and take advantage of the myriad of services we offer. Anne and her family rely on Circle Center to provide the care Susan needs to allow Anne to continue to work, while the staff has become the support team that has helped Anne navigate and grow into the role of caregiver. Circle Center has become a part of their extended family. Sue attends every day and loves the interaction and activities (especially the Wii bowling!) and Anne and her family have found complete peace, knowing she is happy and cared for, while they go to work and care for their children.

Finally, Theresa Waldron and her partner, Sheri Morris, are caregivers for Eiko Shima. Eiko, who is not related to Theresa or Sheri, has been a part of the family for nearly 50 years, since her time as a nanny when Theresa's family was stationed in Japan. Eiko moved back to the U.S with Theresa's family, and when her parents moved into assisted living there was no question that Theresa and Sheri would continue to care for Eiko, who was experiencing early signs of dementia. The safe and engaging environment of Circle Center has turned what seemed to be a stressful and unmanageable situation into a consistent and happy lifestyle for Theresa, Sheri and Eiko.

Whether or not you or a loved one is currently attending Circle Center, please remember that our caregiver support is available to the public.