



Increasingly demanding caregiver role heightens need for caregiver support

Family Caregiver Council: Celebrating Family Caregivers Is Just the Start

SAN DIEGO, November 1, 2016 – As we celebrate National Family Caregivers Month this November, the Family Caregiver Council, made up of national leaders in the caregiving and active aging space, acknowledges the impact this complex and demanding role has on adult children and spouses and the need for expanded support initiatives.

The theme this year for the national event is “Take Care to Give Care,” which underscores the importance of paying attention to the stresses of caregiving – and the family caregiver. With our rapidly aging baby boomer and senior population, the physical, emotional and financial burden on the 44 million U.S. family caregivers is not sustainable, the Council cautions.

“A number of recent studies identified the growing burden on this group – more than 18 percent of the population,” says David Inns, CEO of GreatCall. “The data that is emerging from our new familycaregivercouncil.com website echoes this problem. Family caregivers need better approaches and support when it comes to work-life balance, sibling strife, and respite care, to name just some of the issues. The focus needs to move from person-centered care to person-and family-centered care in order to effect change.”

The majority of visitors to the Family Caregiver Council website are caring for parents and spouses, with most living with the person they care for. Whether they are sharing a home or caring for someone who lives on their own or in long term care, the issues are similar: managing complicated medical care, often hands-on without training, grappling with both their own and their family member’s emotional and physical issues, dealing with finances and unanticipated caregiving expenses, lack of paid work leave and their own family.

“While facing all those caregiving challenges, caregivers too often put themselves last. But only by taking care of yourself first can you be strong enough to take care of your loved one. You really do need to *‘take care to give care!’*” says John Schall, CEO of Caregiver Action Network.

The recent study “Families Caring for an Aging America,” conducted by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, finds that the most effective interventions are tailored to caregivers’ risks needs and preferences, so individual assessment is essential. The report notes the importance of assessing, training and counselling family caregivers and practicing

self-care, from learning relaxation training to making use of respite care. The study also urges more support from government agencies in terms of policy and funding reform.

"We were encouraged by the recommendations in the National Academies report, including the recommendation to identify a national strategy to support family caregivers," added Gail Gibson Hunt, President and CEO of the National Alliance for Caregiving. "We should continue to work together as a community to pursue a national plan for America's families."

What can family caregivers do to take better care of themselves? The website offers strategies and advice for dealing with a multitude of issues. These include ambivalent feelings about their role, the challenges of long-distance caregiving, family friction, dementia, work, and even life after caregiving.

"Taking care can take many forms," says Inns, "from knowing how to ask for help to what not to say when having difficult conversations with family members, to talking to the HR manager at work. The key is not to wait for the signs of stress to stare you in the face. It is also knowing what you need and where to find those resources even before you need them."

The website recommends seven ways to manage caregiver stress:

- Accept help
- Focus on what you CAN do
- Set realistic goals and expectations
- Get connected to a caregiver community of resources – transportation, meals, classes
- Join a support group, in person or online, or participate in a caregiver forum on the web
- Set personal health goals and don't neglect your health
- Take a breather, even if it is brief. You only have 10 minutes? Read something funny, play music, meditate, take a brisk walk around the block or call a friend.

Family Caregiver Council members include: Scott Collins, CEO, Link-age; Danielle Glorioso, Executive Director, UCSD Center for Healthy Aging; Gail Hunt, President & CEO, National Alliance for Caregiving; David Inns, CEO, GreatCall; Margaret Kabat, National Director, Caregiver Support Program, Department of Veterans Affairs; Brooks Kenny, Strategic Advisor, Lotsahelpinghands; Sona Mehring, CEO, CaringBridge; John Schall, CEO, Caregiver Action Network; Kai Stinchcombe, Co-Founder & CEO, True Link; Sherwin Sheik, President & CEO, Care Linx; Louis Tenenbaum, Founder, Aging in Place Institute. The Council's advisors include Laurie Orlov, Founder, Aging in Place Technology Watch; Sally Abrahms, writer on aging and caregiving; and Mary Furlong, CEO, MFA.

About GreatCall

GreatCall is the leader in connected health for active aging. With health and safety solutions for older adults and their family caregivers, GreatCall's innovative suite of easy-to-use mobile products and award-winning approach to customer care helps aging consumers live more independent lives. Products and services include: Lively Wearable, Lively, Jitterbug Flip, Jitterbug Smart and health, safety and wellness apps Urgent Care, GreatCall Link, MedCoach and 5Star.

GreatCall's products and services are sold nationwide at leading retailers as well as direct to consumers at 1-800-296-4993 and online at GreatCall.com. Service covers the U.S. GreatCall is headquartered in San Diego, CA. To learn more about GreatCall products and services, please visit www.GreatCall.com. This news release and other corporate assets are available at www.greatcall.com/newsroom or follow our news on Twitter [@GreatCallinc](https://twitter.com/GreatCallinc) and on Facebook at Facebook.com/greatcall.

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