



Sharing your caregiving wisdom

Madison - Family caregivers in Wisconsin can become part of a new registry of caregivers, which gives them a chance to share their knowledge and insights to help other families benefit from the caregiving experience and cope with its difficulties.

The League of Family Caregivers (LEFC) is being created at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, in partnership with UW-Extension, to allow researchers to learn more about the experiences of family members who care for their spouses, parents or other relatives. This will, in turn, lead to improved resources and educational tools available to the caregivers.

"The LEFC is a registry of people who want to help others by sharing their wisdom about caring for family members who are frail or ill," says Mary Brintnall-Peterson, UW-Extension program specialist in aging. "Their insights are critical for developing resources and support services that will best meet family needs. Unfortunately, finding family caregivers who are willing to share their stories is a difficult task."

Family caregivers who enroll in the registry will be part of a research program that is working to help create better service and resources to support family caregivers throughout the country. Caregivers will be invited to complete one or more short interviews or questionnaires about their caregiving experiences. The information collected will be used to create assessment instruments, educational tools, and care management protocols that will be used by professional service providers to better serve family caregivers.

Membership in the registry is free and confidential and the rewards are plentiful, including: access to caregiver resources, information about respite programs and support groups, news in the caregiving community, and the distinct opportunity to share your own caregiving experience with others.

By enrolling in the LEFC, family caregivers can help create programs to support people like themselves, who work hard to care for their relatives. Members will find useful information about resources and support services available to them by visiting the LEFC web site at <http://familycaregivers.uwm.edu>. To enroll or learn more about the LEFC, contact Jenny Lemkuil at 414-229-3289 or familycaregivers@uwm.edu, or visit the web site.

Organizers of the registry are seeking representation from a wide variety of caregivers -- from different parts of the state, diverse backgrounds and ethnicity, and various roles in the caregiving relationship.

"We would like to have as many caregivers as possible participate in developing the assessment tools and resources," says Brintnall-Peterson. "Information gathered through this registry will help change the training and services provided to caregivers, and will improve the ways UW-Extension and others work with caregivers to help them do their jobs."

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