

## STATEWIDE PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S REPORT | *Tara Giese*

### 10 WAYS TO HELP A FAMILY CAREGIVER

- 1. Stay in touch.** Show you care by sending a card, calling and visiting on a regular basis.
- 2. Do little things without asking.** Drop off dinner, weed their garden or take the older adult for a drive.
- 3. Be specific when offering help.** Say something specific like, "I could stay with George on Thursday so you can run errands." It makes it much easier to say yes!
- 4. Be a good listener.** Sometimes all we need is someone who listens and cares about us. Be supportive and nonjudgmental.
- 5. Encourage the caregiver to take care of themselves.** Encourage them to use respite care each week and other supportive community services.
- 6. Don't offer unsolicited advice.** It is easy to say what you would do but this can often be hurtful.

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### CONTACT US TODAY

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Dear Friends,

Family caregivers provide valuable and essential support. This demanding role often brings many joys and challenges. In 2019, we continued working alongside caregivers to relieve stress, build skills and prepare for the future.

We continue to explore innovations that match changing circumstances in families and our state, while responding to growing demand. In 2019, we served 390 caregivers and provided 11,128 hours of respite care (a 66.5% increase from 2018). We conducted 1,904 sessions of caregiver counseling or coaching.

In the past year, we launched a new service: Emergency Care Planning for Caregivers. This helps caregivers put a plan in place, so they are ready in case a crisis or emergency happens. With the family, LSS provides an assessment, sets up meetings and outlines a plan for support. We also follow-up on the plan and provide referrals. Thanks to a grant from the Minnesota Division of Veterans Affairs, we also adapted this service to address the special circumstances of military families.

Technology continues to be essential. Through virtual caregiver support groups, we can now reach those who cannot attend a meeting in person. Our popular Powerful Tools for Caregivers course is now available online. Whether attending these classes in person or connecting through their digital device, caregivers can increase their self-care and confidence to handle difficult situations, emotions and decisions.

These supports are part of our menu of services. We also offer in-home respite care, group respite care, training and education, counseling and coaching.

It is a privilege to support our caregiving neighbors who demonstrate extraordinary love, dedication and courage. We are grateful to the volunteers, families, employees, donors, congregations and local leaders who make this possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara Giese".

Tara Giese  
MSW Statewide Program Director  
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**7. Encourage the caregiver to attend a local support group.** It is very healing to be with others who are walking in similar shoes. Offer to stay with their loved one so they can attend.

**8. Ask the caregiver how they are doing.** We often focus on the person who is ill and forget to ask how the caregiver is doing.

**9. Purchase gift certificates for home care, respite care, adult day care, massages, etc.** Send flowers for no reason!

**10. Reach out to others!** Connect people who are willing to help the family by doing something weekly, like providing respite care, making a meal, visiting or doing yard work.

## ACTIVE. ◆ HEALTHY. INDEPENDENT.

### LSS Older Adult Services

With the right community supports, older Minnesotans are *'Abundantly Aging'*: staying healthy, choosing to live at home longer, giving back as volunteers and remaining as independent as possible.

**Senior Linkage Line:** 800.333.2433  
seniorlinkageline.com

**Minnesota Relay 711:** Dial 711 from anywhere in the country, and you will be connected to the relay service in the state where you are located.



## FINDING CONNECTION AND PEACE OF MIND



Tom and Jeannette Meszaros live on a farm in Hewitt, Minnesota. Five years ago, Tom received a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. The couple managed at first, with support from their sons and occasional visits from longtime friend, Dave Rokes.

Then one day, Tom went missing for 18 hours. A sheriff found him 100 miles away from home – hungry, confused and experiencing delusions. The incident was traumatic for everyone, including Jeanette, who started to recognize a need for help.

She soon learned about LSS Caregiver Respite service. Through regular volunteer visits, it offers caregivers a break and positive social interactions for older adults needing support. Dave Rokes was invited to become an LSS respite care volunteer for the couple. He received training and now visits each week.

Dave and Tom discuss trucks, dogs and hunting, and like watching football games, combat films and John Wayne westerns. During visits, Jeannette runs errands and recharges through long walks, naps and crafting.

During visits, Jeanette can relax and Dave benefits, too. "It feels good to do something for someone else," he said.

## POWERFUL TOOLS FOR CAREGIVERS

We held a six-week education workshop at St. Michael's Parish in Mahanomen, Minnesota in November and December. It teaches caregivers a variety of skills that include self-care, assertive communication, being optimistic and much more. We received some great feedback from participants!

"I liked the caring instructors, the brainstorming and being validated for ideas shared."

"The 'I' statements helped me to really pay attention to how I speak to others."

"I thought this class was awesome. I loved having our input written down on posters and sharing my ideas with others."

"I liked the relaxation techniques."

The Caregiver Support & Respite Program is funded under contract with the Minnesota Board on Aging and the following Area Agencies on Aging as part of the Older Americans Act: Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging, Central Minnesota Council on Aging, Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging.

LSS Caregiver Support & Respite is a service of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, which serves **all people** regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability or age