

## OLDER AND WISER: Services help support caregivers

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At a presentation on May 16, BC Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie told the capacity audience that a huge percentage of caregiving in our province is performed by unpaid caregivers.

On their website, the Family Caregivers of B.C. say that “there are over 1 million people (the estimated population of the province is 4,606,371) providing unpaid care for adult family members and friends in British Columbia.”

They go on to say that family caregivers are a “vital part of the health-care team.”

According to a 2015 report called *Caregivers in Distress*, by the Seniors Advocate Office, there are more than 30,000 seniors in British Columbia for whom the ability to live as independently as possible is “enhanced by the contributions of an unpaid caregiver.”

These caregivers save the B.C. health-care system \$4.1 billion, and seniors supported at home by caregivers are less likely to go into (expensive) residential care. The report goes on to say that caregivers undergo a good deal of stress and they need our support.

Many of us are taking on the role of a caregiver. You could be a spouse or child of an adult who needs support to live in his or her own home. You could be supporting a person in a care facility. You may be providing support in your own home. North Shore Community Resources Society defines a caregiver as a person who provides emotional or practical support for an adult family member or friend.

Though caregiving can be rewarding, it can also be stressful. Many experience unrealistic expectations of their ability to cope, lack of family supports, and challenges navigating the health-care system.

Many also have trouble finding appropriate resources, and experience guilt and worry about making the right decisions for their loved ones.

NSCR program co-ordinator Karyn Davies says “the important thing for caregivers to remember is that they are not alone. There are resources out there, and we have ways to support them.”

NSCR provides several services for caregivers including workshops, support groups, education sessions, information and consultation. They also sponsor the Resource Guide for Family Caregivers North Shore Edition, an invaluable booklet outlining and listing tools, tips, and services to support a caregiver in their role. To find out more about NSCR services and the resource guide check out the website at [nscr.bc.ca \(http://nscr.bc.ca\)](http://nscr.bc.ca).

Caregiver Expo, presented by the North Shore News and North Shore Community Services Society (NSCS), was held on May 27 to showcase resources available in the community.

The expo featured many organizations and businesses that support caregivers on the North Shore with services, products, and techniques for surviving the challenge of caregiving.

There were exhibitors who provide home care, housing options, hearing products and services, meal programs, transportation, end-of-life services, library services and information.

In addition to exhibitor booths, there were presentations on financial abuse, meditation for recharging and rest, real-life caregiving experiences, the art of giving and accepting help, relaxation techniques and dementia care.

Many of us have been a caregiver or will be a giver in the future. I have been one twice, with the support of others. Getting support made the challenge easier and more rewarding. Don't hesitate to get help if you are in this crucial role.

*Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 47 years and has worked for and with seniors for 20 of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome. [lions view@telus.net](mailto:lions_view@telus.net) ([mailto:lions view@telus.net](mailto:lions_view@telus.net))*

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