

# Caregiver Corner

*Ideas and Information for People Caring for Others*

**March and April 2020 / 607-778-2411 / [www.gobroomecounty.com/senior](http://www.gobroomecounty.com/senior)**

## Events for Caregivers

### Home Repair Options through First Ward Action Council



**Date:** Tuesday, March 17  
**Time:** 2:00 – 3:00 PM  
**Location:** Broome West Senior Center  
2801 Wayne Street, Endwell  
**Presenter:** First Ward Action Council

Attend this presentation to learn about the various home repair programs First Ward Action Council (FWAC) provides. The presenter will give an overview of what each program offers along with income and eligibility guidelines, including which municipalities in Broome County qualify for FWAC programs.

Home modifications and repairs can help seniors live more comfortably in their homes. Making an older adult's home safer and more accessible reduces fall risk, prevents accidents, and increases independence.

Pre-registration is requested; please call (607) 778-2411 to reserve your seat.

## LSVT BIG and LOUD

### Therapy Specific to Parkinson's Disease

**Date:** Wednesday, April 22  
**Time:** 10:00 – 11:00 AM  
**Location:** Broome West Senior Center, 2801 Wayne Street, Endwell

**Presenter:** Karen Hirst and Colleen Kussard from Good Shepherd Communities



Join us for an informal discussion on Parkinson's Disease and the caregiver's role, presented by an Occupational Therapist and a Physical Therapist from Good Shepherd Communities.

There will be an overview of the primary symptoms of Parkinson's as well as the many secondary symptoms like sleep disturbance and worsening cognition. Caregivers will learn tools and strategies to help improve or maintain function and enhance the quality of life for those diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, such as the ways posture, body mechanics and relaxation techniques can help. Examples of simple and safe exercises that can be done at home will also be provided.

Pre-registration is requested; please call (607) 778-2411 to reserve your seat.



## Caregiver Chat Groups

These informal chats are open to caregivers of any age. No registration required.

**Place:** Stay Healthy Center  
Oakdale Mall, Johnson City, NY  
**Date:** Monday, March 2  
Monday, April 6  
**Time:** 1:00-2:30 PM

**Place:** Broome West Senior Center  
2801 Wayne Street, Endwell  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 18  
Wednesday, April 15  
**Time:** 9:30-11:00 AM

**Q** : Six months ago, out of the clear blue sky, “lightning” struck my life and changed it forever. When I arrived home from work one evening, I found my husband (68 years old) unresponsive on the living room floor. He had suffered a stroke and we were told he would not regain use of the right side of his body and would have lasting brain damage. I am not prepared to be full-time caregiver. How can I manage my new life without losing my independence?



**A** : Sometimes life has a way of sending “lightning” or unexpected crises, and most of the time it finds us unprepared. However, it’s never too late to plan for your future. Your biggest need right now is to get help for yourself in providing care for your husband.

There are many options you can explore to get respite care, help with home repairs and other in-home duties. Start by calling NY Connects (607-778-2278) and ask for information on available options for assistance.



Another recommendation would be to create a Circle of Care Diagram. This is a simple, useful tool for finding help with caregiving.

Start by drawing about 6 or 7 concentric circles on a blank sheet of paper. In the center circle write the name of the person receiving care. On each concentric circle (starting closest to the name) write the name of someone most likely able to help with caring for your husband (family, neighbors, his close friends). Then repeat this exercise and put your name in the center. After you have completed both diagrams, compare them and identify family and friends who can assist you with caring for your husband, as well as identifying your closest friends and family that would be willing to help you.

This exercise is not a long-term fix to caring for your husband, but it can help you identify individuals that would be willing to provide immediate relief.



“Spring is when you feel like whistling, even with a shoe full of slush.” – Doug Larson

## Aging in Place: A Real Choice

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As people age, they may be faced with making the decision as to whether to move out of their existing home where they have raised family. Too often, these homes are not conducive to the physical challenges that elders may face in their advancing years. A recent study of aging baby boomers shows an overwhelming propensity to remain in their current homes after retirement. As a result, many home builder and housing associations throughout the country are organizing educational activities to highlight programs and support services, such as healthcare, chore services and transportation, which will enable elders to age comfortably in place.

Consumers who plan to age in place should take proactive steps to modify their homes while they are still financially and physically able. The National Association of Home Builders recommends the following modifications:

There should be at least one bedroom and one bathroom on the first floor. First floor living is a high priority for older adults. Having a full bath and a master bedroom on the main floor makes it easier for those who have trouble climbing stairs.

There should be conveniently located and easy to use controls and handles. Raised electrical outlets, electrical switches positioned slightly lower, and thermostats with large, easy to read numbers are perfect for older people. Installing lever handles makes it easier for people with arthritis to open doors.

There should be no-step entrances. Having at least one entry without steps creates easier access for everyone, regardless of ability. It may be appropriate to install a wheelchair ramp in at least one entrance as well.

There should be extra maneuvering space throughout the home. Wider doors and hallways can make a home more accessible.

There should be drawers instead of shelves in the lower kitchen cabinets, which would accommodate a person in a wheelchair. In addition, shelves under the kitchen sink and stovetop can be converted from

storage space to knee space for those who prefer to clean and cook while seated. Changing knobs on the kitchen cabinets to D-shaped pulls that are a contrasting color to the cabinet doors make it much easier for the older person to grasp. Changes to the sink area can include changing the faucet to the single-handle lever type and installing an extra-long hose for the faucet sprayer. This would allow the older person to fill large pots that are sitting on the stove.

Bathrooms should be equipped with safety features. One of the most important rooms in the house to design correctly in order to allow homeowners to age in place is the bathroom. Grab bars, a bath chair and a raised toilet seat can provide stability for the older person and prevent falls. Falls in the bathroom or on the stairs are the second leading cause of accidents for elders, just behind automobile accidents. It would be prudent to invest in enlarging at least one bathroom in the home. A larger bathroom makes maneuvering easier for people with walkers, crutches and wheelchairs.

For those who have to handle daily climbing of stairs, it is very important to have proper lighting on stairways. Eyesight changes as people age. Most of the older homes don't have adequate lighting on stairways. Therefore, installing lights with adjustable controls, or dimmers, can help prevent glare and ensure proper lighting. Task lighting is also preferred for cooking, reading and shaving, while softer light is appropriate for night trips to the bathroom.

There are some elders who will choose to move to a new home when they retire, many of which will have a number of the above features in place. Many others, however, will not have the ability to make such a move, for a number of reasons. By planning ahead, and making some home modification changes now, elders can choose to remain in their home, comfortable in their surroundings, aging in place, maintaining their independence and dignity.

## Crafty Caregiver Tips to Make Tasks Easier

### Key Confusion:

Use nail polish to paint different colors on each key to easily recognize the one you need.



**Hard to Grip:** Purchase inexpensive foam hair rollers. Push them over hard to grip, narrow items, such as utensils, pens or toothbrushes.

### Avoid Spills:

Place four or five ordinary rubber bands around a glass. The rubber bands provide a nonslip surface for easy gripping.



The Caregiver Services Program is sponsored by a grant from the Administration for Community Living, New York State Office for Aging, and Broome County.

*Contributions are accepted to help support this program. No one is denied service because of an inability or unwillingness to contribute and all contributions are confidential.*

To make a contribution, please send checks or money orders to: Broome County Office for Aging, PO Box 1766, Binghamton, NY 13902.

Be selective  
in your battles.  
Sometimes peace  
is better than  
being right.



**Caregiver Corner**  
Broome County Office for Aging  
60 Hawley Street  
PO Box 1766  
Binghamton, NY 13902-1766

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[ofa@co.broome.ny.us](mailto:ofa@co.broome.ny.us)

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**Thank you!**