



The Serenity Connection

Caring for Your Loved Ones in Greater Victoria

CAREGIVER PROFILE



Our caregivers are totally committed, highly qualified and carefully selected individuals who are personally and thoroughly screened, bonded and insured.

Most importantly our caregivers are dependable and extraordinarily caring of others. In addition to their previous experience, our caregivers receive continuous training that includes a specialized curriculum exclusive to Serenity Home Care that results in them becoming Certified Companion Aides™. These highly qualified and trained caregivers are ready to help you and your loved ones with a variety of daily activities such as:

- Caring companionship
- Meal planning and preparation
- Incidental transportation
- Running errands
- Light housekeeping
- Medication reminders
- Assistance with bathing and grooming
- Assistance with bill paying
- Information and referral services

Our personalized and affordable services are available 7 days a week and can range from a few hours a day to 24 hour and live in care.



Welcome to the Winter 2013/2014 Serenity Connection

Compassion, empathy, respect, companionship, caring — just a few of the words to describe the infectious love Sandy Gamble has for the work she does and the clients she cares for at Serenity Home Care.

A self-described “giver”, the compassion and empathy Sandy shows her clients is rooted in something deeper than her natural proclivity to care and nurture. Having spent two years of her own life dependent on other people for her needs, Sandy understands intimately the challenges and emotions her clients experience as they learn to depend on others to help them adjust to new limitations brought on by health challenges, mobility issues, isolation and the basic need for human companionship.

One of Sandy’s clients has advanced Alzheimer’s and lives at Kiwanis Village. She’s in great physical condition and loves to go for walks. Sandy and her spend hours together, each week, enjoying sights and scenery. With the family’s permission, Sandy brings her car so they can explore new and interesting locations each week they walk on the sand at Willows Beach, stroll the grounds at Government House, drive along Dallas Road and admire the boats. She might not “know” who Sandy is, but her face lights up when Sandy walks in the room. The staff at Kiwanis comment about the big difference the outings with Sandy make in her life. Sandy spends two hours each evening, five days a week, with a 95-year-old

client. The client is blind and in a wheel chair, but still lives at home on her own. Together, they listen to classical music or an audio book and then Sandy helps her get ready for bed, tucks her in and locks the door until the nurse caregiver arrives the next morning. When it comes to care giving, it’s as much about what you do, as how you do it. Recently she told Sandy, “Your touch is so gentle; I can tell how much you care.”

It’s true. Sandy cares deeply for her clients. Whether she’s helping them run errands, visiting with them while the live-in caregiver takes a break or helping to count airplanes as they fly overhead, she says “it just doesn’t get better than putting smiles on people’s faces.”



**Murray Tough
Kathy Tough**

Owners,
Serenity Home Care

IN THIS ISSUE:

CAREGIVER OF THE SEASON

1

FINANCE/CONSUMER: Top Ways Seniors Can Use the Internet

2

ROTATING TOPIC: Prepare to Stay Healthy This Winter

2

HEALTH & LIFESTYLES: Socialising With Quality of Life

3

SPOTLIGHT: Unique Challenges for the Male Caregiver

4

VICTORIA HOSPICE

4



FINANCE & CONSUMER RESOURCES

Top Ways Seniors Can Use the Internet as a Resource

Seniors have been the slowest adopters of Internet use, with the vast majority taking to email first, and other online resources more reluctantly. However, this year seniors hit a milestone: more than half of North Americans who are 65 or older now use the Internet. That is the first time data have shown more than 50 percent of seniors going online. A study this year by the Pew Research Center found that 53 percent of older citizens use the Internet or email. Just over a third (34 percent) use social networks like Facebook. However this is still well below the rest of the adult population, where 80 percent are now online.

Here are some of the reasons that Internet use has continued to gain popularity among seniors and why you or your loved one might want to consider trying it out if you have not already:

Keeping in touch. The Internet in general, and Social Media in particular, is a remarkable tool for connecting with people, especially for seniors who wish to keep in touch with family. But seniors have also found that they can reconnect with their college roommates, their childhood best friends, or even lost loves through the power of social networking. The Internet enables us to view videos, read blog posts, share pictures and have conversations with people living far way and those whom we thought we'd never see again.

Information Resource. Seniors use the Internet to find information about anything and everything. It can lead them to cultivate hobbies, develop business ideas, learn more about new products, or work on their genealogy. Virtually any topic of interest they can research and find information about if they know how to do searches through Google or other search engines.

Answer Questions. By using the online tools available, many senior citizens can reach out via Twitter, Facebook, videos, blogs and live chats to answer questions they may have. They can find forums about virtually any topic online.

Entertainment. Seniors can watch old television shows and movies, as well as find videos from "back in the day," on paid sites like Netflix and Amazon or even for free on sites like Hulu or YouTube. They can read ebooks, newspapers and magazines, articles and blog posts of interest, look up song lyrics and find out what their favorite entertainers are up to. They can play games, either by themselves or with family and friends. Seniors who are confined to their homes don't have to feel as isolated when they're home alone. And many of these sources of entertainment are free.

Online Commerce. Whether balancing your bank book or buying a sweater on Amazon, the Internet allows seniors to do a variety of tasks that are increasingly difficult as they lose their mobility in later years — all from the comfort of home. There are also an increasing number of companies offering senior discounts to entice this more reticent demographic to shop online.

Learn. Just because one is older doesn't necessarily mean one wants to stop learning. Many seniors are now taking courses online as well as using a variety of online resources to keep informed and keep their minds active.

Meet New People. The social networks allow people of all ages to meet others, for both business and pleasure. From online meetings seniors can plan offline meet-ups and networking events with people of their own age and similar interests.

Find work. 65 is not necessarily retirement age for seniors anymore. Many would like to continue working, if not full time, then as a consultant or freelancer. A number of online networks enable them to find opportunities, post online resumes and view and apply for job listings.

Caren Parnes | *For the Senior's Choice*



ROTATING TOPIC

Prepare to Stay Healthy This Winter

Winter is approaching, and as the temperature drops, it's important for older adults to prepare for the potential risks that cold weather can bring.

For the thousands of seniors living in cold weather climates, winter may pose some significant risks not as prevalent during the rest of the year. Seniors are more prone to injury from falls on wet and icy pavement, they are more susceptible to flu viruses, and colder weather poses a particular risk of hypothermia in seniors.

Older adults should keep these tips in mind to help ensure safety and optimum health this winter.

Seniors have a lower metabolic rate and a decrease in the constriction of their blood vessels with age, which can more easily lead to hypothermia, a condition that occurs when too much heat escapes from the body. It is important to stay warm and keep dry. It is equally important to remember good nutrition. Food provides the fuel we need to keep warm. Hot food and warm drinks are best to warm the body.

When going outdoors, remember to dress warmly. Wear layered, loose-fitting clothing and mittens. When possible, wear a hat to protect against heat loss since close to half of all body heat is lost through the head.

You can prevent many winter hazards simply by planning ahead. Before winter arrives, check all the windows and doors in your home for cracked or worn sealants. A new application of caulking may be needed. Alternatively, staple a sheet of plastic tarp over really old windows. Talk to your electric or gas companies to see if you can be put on a level billing system that averages your energy payments equally over 12 months. This doesn't save money, but it does help to budget during the heating season and prevent your heat from being shut off.

Continued on Page 3



SENIOR HEALTH & LIFESTYLES

Studies Connect Socialising With Quality of Life

Multiple recent studies have revealed an increasingly strong link between social interaction and mental and physical well-being for seniors. While socialization is critical for all people, seniors can be more susceptible to isolation. Many seniors have spent a considerable portion of their lives in the company of others — be it in the workplace or raising children.

Upon reaching retirement age, and with children leaving the house, the opportunities for socialization often decrease, especially if the senior must rely on others for transportation.

But an active social lifestyle is more important than ever in helping seniors maintain a sharp mind, remain connected to the world around them, increase feelings of happiness, and develop a sense of belonging.

Studies have shown that socializing can produce the following positive effects:

Improved mental health: Symptoms of depression and memory problems affect many seniors. In fact, approximately seven million people over the age of 65 experience depression, and it is estimated that dementia touches one in seven Americans over the age of 71.

Having consistent human contact and interaction can reduce both, recent studies revealed. One such study documented in the *Annals of Family Medicine*, gathered 193 seniors with depressive symptoms

and provided either individualized physical activity or social visits for six consecutive months. Excerpts from the study stated that

“Social contact may be as effective as physical activity in improving mood and quality of life” and “social participation and social support networks are paramount to long-term positive outcomes and psychological well-being for older people.”

Improved nutrition: The need for proper nutrition is vital for seniors, but healthy habits can be difficult to maintain when living alone. “Approximately 35 percent of elderly people suffer from malnutrition,” said Marie-Jeanne Kergoat, a professor at the Université de Montréal. Kergoat and others conducted a study among hospitalized seniors and discovered a correlation between food intake and social interaction: “patients ate more when social interactions were friendly and lively.”

Improved physical health: Multiple studies have also revealed that an active social life can boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, and reduce physical pain that is reinforced by depression.

Strength in numbers: When it comes to socializing, the more the merrier. Seniors in large groups are more likely to encourage healthy habits among each other, including exercise.

How can seniors stay socially connected?

Many seniors have family members or other caregivers who periodically interact with them, but that is often not enough social contact. While it’s comforting for seniors to know their needs are met, sufficient social interaction includes consistently engaging with others, primarily with peers.

Below are avenues for seniors to stay socially connected:

- Volunteer
- Join clubs and groups
- Visit senior centers
- Move to retirement communities
- Stay connected with friends and family
- Get a pet
- Attend a church
- Learn new skills
- Learn to use the internet

It is not uncommon for seniors to resist change, and some may need gentle encouragement to get more socially involved, but the benefits of an active social lifestyle reach well into the future.

*Reprinted courtesy of www.holidaytouch.com
<http://www.holidaytouch.com/Retirement-101/senior-living-articles/health-and-wellness/socializing-linked-with-quality-of-life>*

To avoid slips and falls, wear non-skid boots or other shoes with plenty of traction.

Cold weather can put extra strain on the heart. When doing winter chores such as shoveling snow, do some warm-up exercises first and take many breaks. To conserve energy, heat only those rooms that you use. Close off the attic, garage, basement, spare bedrooms or storage areas. But don’t overdo your money-saving efforts: keep your thermostat set to at least 18 degrees to prevent hypothermia.

Shift energy use from peak to off-peak times. Shift small tasks like running your dishwasher until after 9 pm

Electrical fires are a common hazard during winter when space heaters are regularly in use. When using a portable heater, plug the heater directly into an outlet, not to an extension cord. Make sure the outlet and wiring are in good condition. Keep the area around the heater clear of furniture, newspaper or other flammable materials and take special care to avoid tripping over cords. Many government, nonprofit and community organizations offer energy have questions

about where to turn for assistance, contact your utility company for more information in your area.

For general information for seniors in British Columbia, the seniorsbc.ca covers a complete range of topics and lists community resources.

Adapted from winter tips article courtesy of

www.4elders.org

<http://www.4elders.org/tips/articles/winter-tips.htm>

SERENITY SUPPORTS THE VICTORIA HOSPICE

Dear Friend, This time of year, when we're looking to spend the coming holidays with family and friends, we also think about people living with life-limiting illness. For them and the people who love them, each moment becomes a season to be savoured as much as possible, as long as possible.

End-of-life care is something we all face. Ourselves, our family and our friends. If ever there was a time for care, comfort and compassion, this is it. We are so impressed with the people who make up Victoria Hospice, the medical staff,

the bereavement counselors, the volunteers and the administration. These people are defining their lives by the care and compassion they give to end-of-life patients and their loved ones.

We support Hospice for what they make possible for our community and for everyone who comes into their 17-bed unit at Royal Jubilee's Richmond Pavilion. There are over 400 people registered with Victoria Hospice.; and last year, Hospice Bereavement Services helped almost 3000 people following a death in the family. We also support

Victoria Hospice because for years now Hospice has been on the cutting edge of research and development.

Hospice vitally needs the support of the community it serves so well.

Go online at www.victoriahospice.org and make a donation.



SPOTLIGHT ON CAREGIVERS

Unique Challenges for the Male Caregiver

Men now represent 45 percent of all family caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association reported that between 1996 and 2011, the percentage of men caring for a family member with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia more than doubled, from 19 to 40 percent. Men have all the same challenges that women have as caregivers. However they also struggle with some issues that are unique to them. Statistically, more male caregivers hold down a full-time job than women, which contributes to the stress of their situation; and they are more often stigmatized by their employers for taking time from work in their caregiving role. There can be some unique emotional tolls as well.

Typically men are problem-solvers, and when a dilemma has no clear solution — often the case as a caregiver — they can feel ineffective, which can lead to depression. And male caregivers tend to be more reluctant to seek help than women, instead internalizing their stress and depression.

Three Tips for Male Caregivers

Since it's imperative for men to help themselves while they're helping their loved ones, these three male-centric tips offer constructive ways to approach caregiving challenges:

Educate yourself. Learn as much as you can about the care recipient's diseases and/or disabilities. Talk to the doctor, a social worker, or a geriatric care manager. Ask questions of healthcare workers. Discuss issues and find out what works for the care recipient and you. Inquire about outside services that can provide assistance or support.

Share your experiences and get support. Typically, men don't talk about caregiving stress, but not sharing what's really going on is a stress unto itself. Acknowledge your emotions. Be honest with yourself. You can't do it all. Know that stress, anger, and frustration are common feelings among caregivers. And don't neglect your own health while caring for your loved ones'.

Caregiving is a lonely job for all who do it, but it is especially so when you look around and don't see members of your tribe. Explore the growing number of support groups for male caregivers.

Lead with and value your strengths. Everyone brings their own abilities to caregiving, and while each person may have different strengths, they are equally important. If managing finances and creating schedules for doctor appointments and medications comes more easily to

you, focus on those and get help for other, more daunting aspects of caregiving. Just because a man is managing his mother's finances instead of giving her a bath doesn't mean he isn't caregiving. Men can also be nurturers, but not always in the same ways as women.

If you're always looking for solutions, then use your 'fixer' predisposition to find solutions with others — whether family members or professional caregivers — when you are overloaded and need help. Below is an online community specifically created for male caregivers that provides support and information:

Caren Parnes | For the Senior's Choice
<http://www.malecaregivercommunity.com>

When to Ask for Help

Serenity Home Care presents a free seminar for caregivers and for people who are concerned that someone they love may need care.

Call to book