

Dementia caregivers are taking a team approach

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BRAINTREE -- Caring for someone with dementia can become easier if the caregiver has a team approach -- asking other family members, friends and neighbors to help out in small but significant ways.

Joan Wright, a certified dementia practitioner, will give a talk at 5 p.m. Tuesday Sept. 26 at the Braintree Department of Elder Affairs on how to build up that team.

She will address why people often resist asking for help and how they can overcome that reluctance and build up an informal team or network. Wright is director of community relations at NVNA and Hospice and also runs a caregivers support group.

The help can range from sitting with the person with dementia for an hour or taking them out for a walk or a ride so the caregiver can get out for a while; handling the finances of the person needing care; cleaning the house; doing the laundry or grocery shopping.

“Sometimes we have to learn how to let others help,” Wright said. She herself was a good example. When she was caregiver for both her parents, neighbors offered to come over and assist or just spend time with Mon and Dad. “I said ‘No’ because I thought they were just being polite,” she said. “I regret that now, especially with my father. In his final days, I think he really would have loved to have them in the house chatting.”

In her talks, Wright makes a sports analogy, calling caregiving a team sport that is hard to do alone. “It is important to build your team with people who will help you and your loved one. Sometimes family members may not be available or

reluctant. How do we get those available to us on board?’’

The faith community in a church or synagogue is another valuable resource, she said.

Caregivers may turn down help because they don't want to violate the privacy of the loved on by letting others know the extent of the illness. Or, they may have a sense of pride in handling it all themselves. Caregivers who don't take care of themselves eventually burn out, Wright said.

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