



CAREGIVER AWARENESS DAY:

Activities that Will Raise the Visibility of Caregiving and Long-Term Care in Your Community and Help Build Your Coalition's "Brand."

Creating a Successful Caregiver Awareness Day in November 2007

November is National Family Caregiver Month. It will be the perfect time to spotlight the important contributions family caregivers make to your community. One of the best ways to do this is to conduct a Caregiver Awareness Day. Below are a number of suggestions for activities that will help your coalition get more visibility and help build its "brand," while requiring a minimum of volunteer hours and budget.

Choose an activity or two that will be most appropriate for your region, your organizations, and your resources, and start planning now! Fall is not far away. Some activities require coordination months in advance, while others are more informal and may require less time. Increasing public awareness of the great work that caregivers do should be a year-round campaign. But Caregiver Awareness Day certainly can be the focal point. Here are a few suggestions:

- Hold a breakfast or luncheon for the Human Resources (HR) heads of local corporations to increase their awareness of working caregivers and corporate eldercare. Ask a local hotel or restaurant to be one of the sponsors by providing a room and food in exchange for promotional consideration (include their name on all promotion and on-site materials). One or more of the corporations can also co-sponsor. Contact the head of HR at each corporation you wish to include so you will have only one contact at each company. Chambers of Commerce can be of assistance in helping you reach the companies. Also your local chapter or state council of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)-- <http://www.shrm.org>--is another good source of HR contacts.
- Pamper your caregivers. Hold a caregiver recognition day that includes spa treats -- manicures, pedicures, massages, haircuts--donated by local beauty schools, along with training in a little yoga and meditation techniques. Not only is this a great award, but it also makes for great television. Ask your coalition to nominate fellow coalition members (they should submit a short paragraph on why the person deserves the spa day) and then let a small committee make the final choices. Let all of your TV stations and newspapers know (a month in advance and then again two weeks before the event) that you are doing this. Great picture and human-interest opportunities here. Any local spa or beauty school would love the publicity!

- Reach out to doctors and nurses. Virtually all counties, regions and states have local medical societies. Their Web sites are full of information on events, contacts and resources. Contact the community liaison person listed on the site, tell them about Caregiver Awareness Day and get them involved. Here are a couple of ways:
 - Ask to conduct a presentation on the issues of caregiver health at one or more of their monthly or quarterly meetings. Get a sympathetic local doc to present with a caregiver and a local resource person.
 - Ask them to let you make a presentation during one of their Grand Rounds (a formal meeting at which physicians discuss the cases of one or more patients or advances in medicine or methods.) Topics can include 1) how the medical community can support caregiving and 2) the social and financial impact of caregiving on the community.
- Hold a Caregiver Conference – a one-day event for family and professional caregivers in an appropriate setting such as a community center, a school or a church. Make the focal point a prominent speaker or a panel of 3-4 prominent speakers. Doctors, nurses, psychologists, gerontologists, attorneys, financial planners and other professionals can offer workshops on a wide range of topics. Contact your local medical society, bar association or Financial Planning Association (http://www.fpanet.org/member/chapters/local_chapters/find.cfm) for expert speakers on topics that might include 1) Legal and financial planning for caregivers, 2) The balancing act: how caregivers can ensure their own physical and mental health while taking care of others, 3) Caring for individuals with Alzheimer's, 4) Handling holiday stress, 5) Preparing for the arrival – and making a home safe for -- people with disabilities, and 5) Good Samaritans: how to help out friends or neighbors who have caregiving responsibilities. Ask a local restaurant to provide food and drink in exchange for promoting the restaurant as a co-sponsor -- or charge a small fee to defray costs.
- Conduct a Caregiver Health Fair/Expo for the public, caregivers, seniors and disabled family members. Coalitions around the country have conducted these activities offering materials on caregiving, advice from mental health professionals and physicians, and even medical screenings, immunizations and memory and cognition testing. You can use the same planning activities listed above in the Caregiver Conference.
- Coordinate a Governor's proclamation signing event for a state Caregiver Day. The event can be either in the state capital or connected to another event in which the governor or lieutenant governor is scheduled to appear. The process is not difficult, but you should begin immediately. You will need to use state data on caregiving to support your cause. Every governor's office has a specific procedure for requesting a proclamation. They are listed on the governors' Web sites, which provide guidelines, forms and other requirements. Here are a few Web sites with examples of requirements.
 - <http://www.governor.virginia.gov/CitizenServices/ConstituentServices/Proclamations/procGuidelines.cfm>
 - <http://www.governor.ks.gov/proclamations.htm>
 - http://azgovernor.gov/cs/constituent_Proc.asp
- Invite political candidates running for office to highlight your Caregiver Awareness Day event with a Town Hall Meeting. Get their schedules from their campaign offices and schedule your event to coincide with their activities. Be sure to invite candidates from all

parties and, depending on your interests, ask them to hold an informal debate on current issues to include long-term care, health and/or Medicaid funding and other appropriate topics. This will be a natural draw for the news media.

- Enlist a state legislator or mayor to be a Caregiver for a Day--shadowing (or filling in for) a real family caregiver to see what they have to do. This will also make for great television and other press. Notify TV stations and local newspapers. Select the family carefully so that the caregiving activities are representative but not too difficult. Give reporters a brief factsheet with the name of the legislator or mayor, names and ages of family members and a bit about their challenges (be sure to get permission from the family before handing out the factsheet to ensure their privacy preferences).
- Create a Visit-our-Legislature Day (like the Alzheimer's Association does in lots of states). Organize family caregivers to go in groups to the legislature, visit their specific representatives, and perhaps hold a hearing or briefing. Each caregiver would be prepared with the same messages to give staffers and legislators; there would be a fact-sheet and other simple materials to hand out.
- Create a Caregiver of the Year award for 1-3 family caregivers. Ask local retailers to provide gift items in exchange for publicity. Make the award ceremony an integral part of one of your other events rather than a stand-alone activity. This is an excellent activity to involve the press. Give them at least a week's warning about the date you plan to make the announcement.
- Set up a booth in a local shopping mall with information on support for family caregivers. You might co-sponsor this event with a local hospital or senior-related community service facility. If possible, pick a date and time during which there is another major community event at the mall (e.g., a health fair or a vendor fair) that you could join. Contact the mall management well in advance of your requested date and emphasize the social and economic impact of caregiving on the region. Ask the mall to promote the day on their marquee and in their print ads. November – just before the holidays – is the busiest time of the year for shopping malls, ensuring a good crowd for your booth. The booth should contain lots of informational brochures on community services available to caregivers and be staffed by social workers who are familiar with local resources and who can answer questions.
- Contact the display advertising department of your local newspaper and suggest that they insert a Caregiving supplement in their newspaper on Caregiver Awareness Day. They will solicit hospitals, medical suppliers, restaurants and other vendors to run ads. Offer to provide the newspaper with statistics on local caregiving, personal interest stories, and information about press-worthy events and your coalition that they can use for articles. If local caregivers have written white papers or unpublished articles (most newspapers will not run previously published work) on appropriate topics, ask them if they would like to have their work included in the supplement and then offer it to the newspaper. Ask if you can post the supplement in pdf format on your Web site.