



“Making every moment matter.”

Learning about hospice service

Caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease or other dementia is a progression of stages. A person might be forgetful or experience changes in mood, behavior or personality. Later, he or she might be confused about time and place and lose the ability to think abstractly. Sensory perception can be altered, affecting vision, smell, taste, touch and hearing. Physical changes occur as well. In late stages, a person can’t perform daily functions without assistance, is likely to be incontinent, speaks fewer than six words a day, can’t sit up straight and can’t hold his or her head up.



“It’s a very long process. It takes years,” said Ruth Wagner, a social worker with Ministry Home Care Hospice Services. She was the guest speaker at the March meeting of the Alzheimer’s caregiver support group.

“If you live it every day, you see a gradual decline,” she said.

There are seven stages of Alzheimer’s and other dementia, in which people have declines in their ability to care for themselves and in functionality. Hospice for end-stage dementia is considered when you notice weight loss, loss of appetite, physical weakness, fatigue, confusion, disorientation, social withdrawal, incontinence, swelling in the feet or ankles, coolness in fingers and toes and changes in skin color. Medical professionals use a functional assessment score, from 1 to 7, to determine a person’s need for hospice. Two doctors, usually a person’s primary care physician and the hospice director, must agree hospice is

warranted. Hospice is for people with a terminal condition who likely have 6 months or fewer to live.

But you can live longer, Wagner said. Patients in hospice are certified periodically to consider their ongoing participation in the program. Some people improve enough they no longer need hospice.

As a hospice worker, she asks, “How can I help you make your life the way you want it to be?”

It’s important to talk about what you and the person you care for want, Wagner said. How do you want to live the remainder of your life? It’s harder to have these discussions as the disease

progresses, she said.

There are many things medical professionals can use to prolong life. You don’t want to make those kinds of decisions in crisis-mode, Wagner said.

Hospice care is 100 percent covered by Medicare. Hospice will cover the cost of medications associated with the disease. Hospice will provide hospital beds, lifts and other medical equipment, as needed. Hospice can provide aides, social workers, CNAs and nurses for care and oversight. Hospice can provide care in the home, in an assisted living facility, nursing home or even in the hospital.

Hospice provides palliative or comfort care. But, “you have to be emotionally ready for it,” Wagner said.

Wagner said of all the people eligible for hospice care through Medicare, only 30 percent to 40 percent actually use it. Some people are not aware of it, how to get involved

or that it's covered care. She noted that not all insurance coverage for hospice care is as generous as Medicare.

The hospice referral process

A caregiver, doctor or patient can make a referral for hospice. It starts with a phone call to the hospice service of your choice. Hospice staff members will do a consultation to determine eligibility. This includes calling the doctor to get medical records and usually seeing the patient. Often, if eligible, hospice can start within 24 hours.

For more information on the web:

<http://ministryhealth.org/MinistryHealth/Services/Hospice/Services.nws>

<http://alz.org>

Who's new

Hilltop announces new employees. Say hello when you see them around.

- Tracy Rohmeyer has joined the staff at Hilltop of Pepper.
- Jami Williams was hired in March and works at Hilltop of Pepper.

Employee spotlight

Wendy Strobe loves helping people, especially older people. She started in this career by accident 18 years ago when a friend wanted to take a CNA course. The friend stopped, but Wendy was hooked. She's worked at Hilltop for a year and half.



Her favorite part of the job? "When I see residents that weren't able to do something on their own and with us helping and encouraging, they are able to do it on their own."

She joked there isn't much about her that would surprise people. "I'm finally going to go on my dream vacation to

New York City," she said, for her honeymoon. She is getting married in four months.

Congratulations, Wendy, and thank you!

Remember when?

On April 17, 1970, the Apollo 13 space mission to the moon ended successfully with the safe return to Earth of three astronauts after an explosion damaged the craft and the moon landing was aborted.

The U.S. lunar spacecraft had launched April 11 with three astronauts aboard: James A. Lovell, John L. Swigert, and Fred W. Haise. However, two days into the mission, an oxygen tank exploded, affecting the spacecraft's normal supply of oxygen, electricity, light and water.

"The astronauts and mission control were faced with enormous logistical problems in stabilizing the spacecraft and its air supply, as well as providing enough energy to the damaged fuel cells to allow successful reentry into Earth's atmosphere," according to a story on the History Channel's website.

The History Channel features stories every day in its Today in History feature. Check it out at <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history>.

Something to do

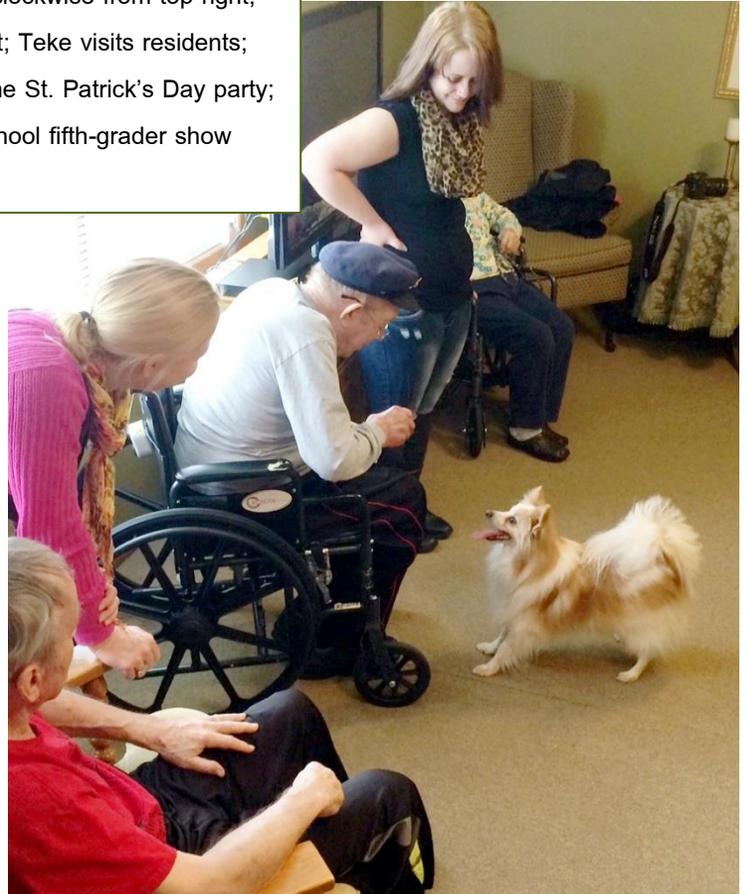
If you're ever looking for something to do, check out <http://visitwisrapids.com> for a list of upcoming events as well as numerous places to visit in the Wisconsin Rapids area.

You can learn about our community's papermaking history at the Wisconsin River Papermaking Museum. The Museum features two guided local history exhibits. The first is a pictorial history of the 110-year-old mansion that houses the museum. The second tells some of the history of the development of the dam on the Wisconsin River at Grand Rapids/Centralia and the beginnings of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. The museum, 730 First Ave. S., Wisconsin Rapids, is open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Admission is free. Call 715-424-3037.

Activities

Want to know what activities are planned? Check out the calendars posted at the sites.

Chopper visits Hilltop residents, clockwise from top right; Edith works on a spring placemat; Teke visits residents; Lucille is named "most Irish" at the St. Patrick's Day party; Ron and a Grove Elementary School fifth-grader show spring placemats they designed.



Safety when spring cleaning

It's spring cleaning time. After months of being cooped up inside, we're anxious to get out and get to gardens and yard work, or cleaning the garage, attic or the house. It's easy to

overdo it, especially if you weren't very active during the winter.

Hilltop employees go through training to help protect themselves from injury when lifting. Everyone can benefit from a reminder to avoid straining, to lift properly and to use the longer, stronger muscles of the legs and arms to your advantage.

One of the best things you can do to protect your back is to keep your muscles strong through exercise, eating healthy and keeping good posture. The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (<http://www.niams.nih.gov>) suggests exercises that increase balance and strength, such as tai chi and yoga, and any weight-bearing exercises that challenge your balance.

Eating to maintain a healthy weight or to lose weight helps avoid putting unnecessary stress on your back, according to a post on <http://www.niams.nih.gov>. The site also recommends getting enough calcium and vitamin D to help prevent osteoporosis, which is responsible for a lot of bone fractures that can lead to back pain.

Here's to a healthy spring and summer. Happy cleaning!

Happy Birthday!

April birthdays will be celebrated at the April gathering on April 24. The party for May birthdays will be May 29. We wish a happy birthday to all on their special day.

- April 6: Daniel Wirtz
- May 23: Robert Nygaard



IMAGE COURTESY OF STUART MILES AT
FREEDIGITALPHOTOS.NET

Final notes

>> The Alzheimer's caregiver support group will meet at 9:30 a.m. the second Thursday of the month at the Aging & Disability Resource Center, 220 Third Ave. S., Suite 1, in Centralia Center by Rapids Mall. Future topics include: **April 9**, Alpine Medical Supply with Mike Grotesend, home medical supplies and Medicare

coverage; **May 14**, Dan Smith of WinterSpring Studios, preserving family memories.

Mark your calendar to attend. It is open to family members, caregivers and anyone who has questions about Alzheimer's disease and other dementia. There is no cost to attend and no donations. Meetings include a time for discussion and sharing.

>> All Things Senior Expo will be **April 19** at Hotel Mead. This new event will feature vendors, wellness checks and breakout sessions. It promises a day filled with information about products, services, programs and resources for Wood County's 50+ community. Hilltop Affiliates will be there. Please plan to attend. The event will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

>> The Aging & Disability Resource Center (www.adrc-cw.com) offers a variety of healthy living programs. Most are offered several times throughout the year in both Wisconsin Rapids and Marshfield. Some of the spring courses offered locally are Medicare Basics and Strong Bones.

>> The Lowell Center monthly newsletter is online at <http://www.seekandfind.com/find/the-city-of-wisconsin-rapids-lowell-center> and in print. You can pick up a copy at Hilltop of Pepper. Find out about programs, events, activities, bus trips and more. There is something for every interest at Lowell Center. We are proud to help sponsor this monthly newsletter.

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