



# Among Friends

Newsletter of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver

December 2007

## Thank You, Donors!

Thank you so very much for the wonderful response to our 2007-2008 Annual Appeal.

We'll be including a full report in the next issue of "Among Friends."

**No, it's not too late to send in that donation.** (Are you kidding? It's never too late!) The address is on page 2.

## Christmas Blessings

All the staff at the Friends of St. John the Caregiver wish you and your loved ones a very blessed Christmas and New Year.

You, and all those you hold dear, remain in our prayers.



## Our Patron's Feast Day

And a very happy Feast of St. John the Caregiver, too!

As you know, the feast of St. John the Apostle and Evangelist — who's also the patron saint of family caregivers — is Dec. 27th.

It somehow seems fitting that this caregiver's special day is just about lost in the general hubbub between Christmas and New Year's. Caregivers tend to go unnoticed as they go about the many obligations and challenges that make up their vocation.

But certainly Jesus — who asked John to be his mother's caregiver — is aware. And certainly Mary — Our Lady in Need — knows all that caregivers do.

Two of their great feast days, the Nativity (Dec. 25) and the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Jan. 1), have his feast day surrounded!

May Our Lord, Our Lady and St. John surround you, too, as a caregiver, care-receiver or one who supports both.

Thank you so much, as a member of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver, for remembering caregivers and those in their care in your prayers on the 27th of each month!

## The Stages of Caregiving

These are the stages of caregiving we have identified, although — it's important to note — they don't necessarily follow this sequence.

**Pre-caregiving.** The caregiver sees himself or herself as a helper, beginning to lend a hand with a limited number of tasks but doesn't identify himself or herself as a "caregiver."

**Self-identifying.** Those caregiving tasks have increased to the point the caregiver realizes and says "I am a caregiver" The caregiver now defines the role for himself or herself or continues to "just do it."

**Studying and researching.** Adopting the role of a student, the caregiver wants to know and understand a loved one's condition or illness, including its symptoms and prognosis, and begins to look for resources for stress management and for informal support, such as family and friends.

**Acting like a caregiver.** The caregiver is actually doing the work, increasing the number of tasks and their frequency, learning new skills and improving on others, and as his or her family member's health deteriorates, begins to feel more stress.

**Recognizing challenges.** The caregivers sees the impact of the situation: the emotional strain for both the family member and the

**Stages** (continued on page 2)

## On the Lighter Side

### **... You might just be a caregiver.**

— If you know six shortcuts — depending on traffic -- between your house and your loved one's nursing home that no GPS device could ever figure out.

— If you never run to the store for just one or two items because you don't want to leave your spouse home alone unless you *really* have to. (And you can get 20 items in the amount of time it takes most shoppers to get two!)

— If your care-receiver's doctor's receptionist instantly recognizes your voice over the phone.

— If it's been a long time since you've come across an insurance claim form that you haven't seen (and filled out) at least once before.

— If you not only recognize the names of at least half the prescription medications mentioned on television shows but could describe the color, shape and size of the pill for each one of them.



## **FSJC PR in October: WOW!**

October was a record-breaking month when it came to public relations and marketing. It began with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities including material

**FSJC PR WOW!** (continued on page 2)

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## The Stages of Caregiving

caregiver, the continuing resistance to accepting help, and the caregiver's own exhaustion, anxiety, and anger.

**Getting help.** The caregiver acknowledges the need for help. The spirituality of the role of caregiving becomes more apparent and the caregiver incorporates prayer and the awareness of God into daily activities. The caregiver locates and accepts formal support from social services and expands informal help to include the extended family, more friends, and the parish community.

**Managing the role of caregiver.** With that added help, the caregiver begins to be more proactive in his or her approach to the role. The caregiver may decide on a "game plan," learn about and use new coping strategies, and begin to feel more in control and more confident.

**Preparing for the end of caregiving:** The caregiver understands that the role of caregiving will end with the death of his or her loved one. In many ways the caregiver begins to grieve the loss of both his or her "once-healthy beloved" and the person needing care that family member has become.

This is the time the caregiver most clearly sees the true value of caregiving and the love and respect he or she has for the one who has needed care.

**Moving on after death.** The caregiver experiences shock, even if death was expected, and grieves the loss of his or her loved one. There may be a period of empty time in the day, a feeling of "now what do I do?"

This is a good time to rest and reminisce.

Acceptance and appreciation of the experience will gradually come.

### New Titles in New Title

We're pleased to report that "Encyclopedia of Mary" (Our Sunday Visitor, 2007) includes an item on "Our Lady in Need" and refers to St. John as "Our Lady's Caregiver."

FSJC had a hand in that! The book was written by the organization's founders Monica and Bill Dodds.

### On the Road: Sacramento

Mark your calendar if you live in the Sacramento, Calif., area. Monica Dodds will be speaking there at the Catholic Breakfast Club on Wednesday, Jan. 9.

Also, if your organization, council, parish or diocese is looking for a speaker, please keep us in mind! We have a list of possible topics on [YourAgingParent.com](http://YourAgingParent.com) but a presentation can be tailored to meet a particular need and audience.

Please don't hesitate to contact us to find out more.

### Members Joining from Around the World and Throughout the United States!

If you've been reading our weekly "Dear Friends" letter at [YourAgingParent.com](http://YourAgingParent.com) you know we've welcomed a lot of new members over the past three months.

Here's a brief recap of the past 12 weeks:

#### Parish Membership

St. Bernadine Church, Baltimore

#### Worldwide

Australia  
China  
Ireland  
Scotland  
United States



#### In the United States

Arizona	Indiana	New Jersey
California	Iowa	New York
Colorado	Kansas	Ohio
Connecticut	Kentucky	Pennsylvania
Florida	Maryland	Tennessee
Georgia	Massachusetts	Texas
Hawaii	Michigan	Washington
Illinois	Missouri	Wisconsin

### Four easy ways you can help family caregivers today

- Invite a friend, family member, or fellow parishioner to become a member of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver.
- Ask your parish to include a link to [www.FSJC.org](http://www.FSJC.org) on its Web site.
- Send a \$25 donation to:  
Friends of St. John the Caregiver  
P.O. Box 320  
Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043
- Pray for caregivers!

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### FSJC PR WOW!

for family caregivers in its 2007-2008 Respect Life Program. (Written by FSJC staff and sent to 100,000 dioceses, parishes and pro-life offices around the country.)

Next came a great article on FSJC by Joseph Pronechen in the **National Catholic Register**. Then a lovely piece by Lisa Ferguson on the spirituality of caregiving (and FSJC!) in **Our Sunday Visitor**

And, in November's **Catholic Digest** (mailed in mid-October and edited by Dan Connors), a list of caregiver resources that included [FSJC.org](http://FSJC.org).

The result? A wonderful increase in the number of visitors to our Web sites, many more requests for "The Little Book of Caregiver Prayers," and new members!