

CAREGIVING: WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

By Susan Evans, Mason County Senior Services

According to the July 2025 Caregiving in the US Research Report from AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving, an estimated 63 million Americans are caregivers, which is a nearly 50% increase since 2015. Nearly one-third are also raising their own children while caring for an adult parent, which is known as the sandwich generation. In terms of the health and financial strain, the report indicates one in five caregivers is in poor health and “half report negative financial impact due to caregiving.” The relevance of this report for older adults is that it shows 60% of caregivers are age 50 and over, and 86% of care recipients are age 50 and over.

The Mayo Clinic recommends caregiver coping strategies such as finding local resources for caregivers and making time for self-care.

While there are various caregiver support groups and programs here in Mason County, just as there are in most communities, the paradox is that caregivers are often stretched so thin that they don't have time to research or attend those very groups and programs designed to help them.

If you know a caregiver, then you know someone who likely needs a break or would appreciate a small act of kindness. Ask what you can do to help.

Now let's talk about your plan for aging as it relates to caregiving. If you're betting that you'll never need a caregiver and will never become a caregiver, the odds are not in your favor (see centered quote above).

Successful caregivers follow a plan created with input from the care recipient and key individuals to first explore the feasibility of aging in place as long as possible. Together,

“There are only four kinds of people in the world—those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers.”

—Rosalyn Carter, Former First Lady of the United States

they build a flexible plan to allow for changing wants and needs, often precipitated by health and financial changes. Sacrificing the physical and emotional health of one caregiver is not sustainable long-term.

Key contents of a caregiving plan include legal and financial documents such as medical and financial powers of attorney and advance healthcare directives. Other important aspects are options for respite care, personal care, transportation, medication management, home safety and mobility modifications and equipment, as well as contingency plans for increased levels of care.

Check out the monthly **Active for Life** publication found at senior centers, locations throughout the community, or online at www.scottvilleareaseniorcenter.com for local caregiver support groups and other caregiver resources. If you are age 60+ and need a volunteer to pick up food or medications for you, or if you'd like an occasional or daily Friendly Caller, contact Mason County Services at 231-316-6523. If you're age 60+ and need a ride to a medical appointment, need housekeeping, or need respite services, call the Scottville Area Senior Center at 231-757-4705. Call Ludington Mass Transit Authority (LMTA) at 231-845-6218 for the Senior Rides program (age 60+) to schedule a ride in any area of Mason County based on availability.

Our Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAAWM) offers monthly “Caregiver News” updates and hosts periodic free virtual educational presentations for caregivers. Visit www.aaawm.org or call 888-456-5664 to sign up for newsletters, to register for events, or to learn more about all available resources.

