

Senior Care Connections

Spring 2009

Home Instead Senior Care's – Give a Carer a Break Essay Competition

Home Instead Senior Care is a major supporter of carer organisations in countries where we operate around the globe and New Zealand is no exception and therefore one of our main yearly events is the 'Home Instead Senior Care – Give a Carer a Break Essay Competition.'

This yearly event is sponsored by Home Instead Senior Care via the Family Care New Zealand magazine, which is a magazine specifically designed to support those families with health and disability needs.

The magazine reaches the homes of a range of family carers and within each family there is a story waiting to be told. Quite often family caregivers devote themselves to caring for a family member with a health or disability need at the expense of their own needs in an attempt to ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of a loved one. Hours of care, week after week can take their toll on a caregiver and it's not surprising that the caregivers get to the stage where they need a well earned break. This is where Home Instead Senior Care can step in and lighten the load.

As part of our 'Home Instead Senior Care – Give a Carer a Break Essay Competition' family carers are invited to contact us, offering an article that

outlines their own experience of being a family caregiver. All entries are submitted to Home Instead Senior Care who then ensure all the entries are complete before sending off to a judging panel.



Diana Lawrence (left) with husband Tony (centre) and Robyn Irvine (right) our Home Instead Senior Care Caregiver

We are now at the point where we are about to recognise our 2009 winner but we recently heard back from Diana Lawrence, our winner for the 2008 year.

Diana became a family caregiver after her husband Tony suffered a total of three strokes before reaching the age of 50. The series of strokes left Tony with cognitive impairment meaning that he cannot be left alone. Diana juggled a part-time job with her day to day caring role as Tony's caregiver with 2007

marking 14 years of caregiving which has been both rewarding but has found Diana in need of regular respite breaks to not only benefit herself but also her husband who reaps the rewards of having a carer who is able to 'recharge her batteries' on a regular basis.

In her recent letter to Home Instead Senior Care Diana says:

"As the lucky winner of the 2008 'Give A Carer a Break Essay' competition, I have just finished my \$2,000 of home care and would like to thank you so very sincerely for the wonderful gift. I very nearly didn't bother to enter but know now that it was the most wonderful gift I have ever won"

Diana explains how the respite time was initially used to take time out to play a game of bridge once a week but then expanded into regular catch ups with old friends for a night at the movies or dinner in the evenings.

"I have again experienced what it's like to lead a normal life" says Diana

"The staff at Tauranga Home Instead were most accommodating, because

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System of the Year - Lifestyle



Westpac Business Excellence Awards 2009

Best Emerging Business



Member of Franchise Association of New Zealand

INSIDE

Neighbours Network Initiative
Alzheimers Guide Resource
Dangers of Middle Age Obesity
Benefits of Vitamin D

Hutt Valley – Neighbours Network

Initiative to safeguard local community gets underway in the Hutt Valley

An idea that blossomed out of trying to help seniors feel more secure and comfortable about remaining in their own homes as they age has expanded to become a campaign which will hopefully see neighbours of all ages becoming



Diane Pye of Hutt Valley Home Instead Senior Care (right) pictured with Dorothy McDonald (left)

more 'neighbourly' and interacting in more meaningful ways with people who they may have lived next door to for years but might never have really gotten to know.

The campaign is known as Neighbours Network and is the brainchild of Diane Pye who is joint owner with her brother Graham Young of Home Instead Senior Care - Hutt Valley which services all of the Lower Hutt, Upper Hutt and Wairarapa regions.

Simple yet very effective approach

The approach, which is also backed by their local Civil Defence and Police (through Neighbourhood Support and Community Patrols) is simple yet very effective, in that a postcard sized fridge magnet is passed out to those wanting to become involved in the campaign. The postcard provides space to record your neighbour's name, their emergency contact's name and relevant phone numbers plus the ability for your neighbour to provide a 'signal time' or in other words a system that will let you know whether there may be a problem and will highlight that they may need help. Failure to see a signal would prompt one of several possible

responses.

How the system works

This 'signal' might be as simple as your neighbour letting you know what time they expect to open the curtains each day. For example if your neighbour expects to be up and about by 9am each day and their curtains are still closed by 9.30am and they haven't called you then you can:

1. Initially ring your neighbour and if no response
2. Ring their emergency contact or,
3. Dial 111

Diane says, "I recently heard about an elderly woman who lay dead in her back yard for five days before being discovered. This tragic situation, where people remain alone and undiscovered, more often than not in their own homes, is repeated countless times around the country."

"There are many elderly people living alone, whose inactivity may go unnoticed by their neighbours because the days of leaning over the fence and chatting to the neighbours seem to have gone."

"This was the catalyst for our Neighbours Network card. If through distributing these cards we are able to get neighbours talking and looking out for each other, and a life is saved, we will be very happy."

A 'neighbourly' watch can certainly make a difference for the elderly and another reason to keep a watchful eye over your elderly neighbours is that statistics show that people over the age of 65 years, have a one in three chance of falling – and for people aged 80 and over, the risk increases to one in two. Falls can be attributed mostly to poor balance, weak muscles, low blood pressure, poor vision and medical conditions (eg Parkinson's disease, stroke).

Older people fall most often at home, leading to injuries such as cuts and bruises, broken bones or worse, with many people requiring admission to a hospital or residential care facility. If the fall is serious enough and the person is unconscious, then without the intervention of a concerned neighbour, the fall could be serious and even fatal due to critical care not being provided quickly enough.



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going to the theatre meant I needed someone at a different time each week, but nothing was too much trouble and they managed to provide cover, whatever hour, every time".

Diana also explains how due to the professionalism of the carers she always 'felt comfortable' leaving her husband

which is one of the most important aspects of a carer 'letting go' of a family member to fully enjoy their respite breaks.

We were delighted to receive Diana's letter as her caregiving story and subsequent experience of receiving care from our Home Instead Senior Care team is the essence of our essay

competition.

We are looking forward to 'giving a break' to another worthy carer in the near future and want to thank Diana and Tony for the chance our Home Instead Senior Care team has had to support them.

Alzheimer's Resource Guide for Family Caregivers

For anyone who has had a family member recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's they'll understand how the news can be devastating. Not only does the family need to support the person with the diagnosis but they also need to come to terms with how this disease, which may take many months or years to progress, will affect their family dynamics.

Often it's the spouse who takes on the bulk of the Alzheimer sufferer's daily needs and despite support from well meaning children and other close family members the primary caregiver can find themselves' feeling isolated as they devote their efforts to a loved one who is constantly restless or who at times wanders.

Also most family caregivers enter into the role of carer without a full understanding of the disease which can leave the carer feeling inadequate and worried whether they are infact providing the best possible care.

In New Zealand we have a host

of resources available to both the Alzheimer sufferer and their family members with one main source of information being Alzheimer New Zealand whose website is a valuable tool to anyone wanting to understand more about the disease and the support that can be accessed. This website can be found at www.alzheimers.org.nz

Another source of information comes via our Home Instead Senior Care team, who are specialists in providing non-medical home based care. We understand the importance of providing specialist Alzheimer's training for our caregivers as with Alzheimer's numbers set to increase to approximately 75,000 by 2026 (there are currently almost 41,000 Alzheimer sufferer's in New Zealand according to a 2008 report) we expect that our focus will shift more and more over time to providing care and support for the families who sit behind these statistics.

One resource we currently have available at Home Instead Senior Care for our clients and their families is our



'Helping Families Cope' booklet which is a valuable Alzheimer's resource guide which offers practical tips and information for both the Alzheimer's sufferer and the caregiver.

For anyone who is thinking about care for a loved one who is suffering from Alzheimer's then they can feel free to contact one of our Home Instead Senior Care offices who can arrange care for as little as 2 hours per week or for longer term care which can extend to both overnight and 24 hour client care.

For more information visit our website at www.homeinstead.co.nz

Middle-Age Obesity Reduces Chance of Good Health in Old Age

Women who are overweight or obese in middle age are less likely to enjoy good health in old age, a new study reports.

Researchers from Harvard School of Public Health and Brigham and Women's Hospital found that, among a large study population of women who lived until at least age 70, being overweight in mid-life was associated with having more health problems later in life, including multiple chronic diseases, and impaired cognitive function, physical function and mental health. Women who were lean at age



18 and maintained a healthy weight through mid-life had the best odds of achieving optimal health later in life.

"Since body weight is a modifiable factor, the good news is that healthy aging

is not purely the consequence of good genes or other factors that one cannot change. If women maintain a healthy weight as adults, they may increase their odds of enjoying a healthy life in their later years," said Qi Sun of Harvard.

Researchers analyzed data from the Brigham and Women's Hospital-based Nurses' Health Study, which began in 1976. The study population included 17,065 female participants who had survived until at least age 70. Body mass index (BMI) and weight gain were measured over time, beginning at mid-life (age 50). Factors such as socioeconomic status, lifestyle, smoking and diet were controlled for in the study.

Women who had increased BMI in 1976, at the beginning of the study (the women's mean age at that time was 50 years), had reduced odds of healthy survival. Obese women (BMI greater than or equal to 30) had 79 percent lower odds of healthy survival compared with lean women (BMI = 18.5-22.9). The researchers also found that women who were overweight (BMI greater than or equal to 25) at age 18 and gained more than 22 pounds between age 18 and 50 had the worst odds of healthy survival and, for all three BMI categories at age 18, those who gained weight had lower odds of healthy survival compared with women who maintained a stable weight.

Study Finds Home Hospitalization Heart Patients Are Happier



Here at Home Instead Senior Care we know there are many reasons why a senior may want to remain at home and recent research conducted in Italy shows that apart from the psychological benefits of remaining at home there are other health related benefits.

The Italian researchers have found that hospital care delivered at home may be a safe and practical alternative to traditional hospital care for elderly patients with suddenly worsening chronic heart failure (CHF).

Researchers from Giovanni Battista Hospital studied patients 75 years or older who were admitted to the hospital for acute decompensation of CHF. Patients were randomly assigned to the general medical ward or to the Geriatric Home Hospitalization Service. Those at home received diagnostic and therapeutic treatments by hospital healthcare professionals.

While patients in both groups had similar mortality rates after six months (15 percent) and similar rates of hospital readmission, only those who received in-home care experienced improvements in depression, nutritional status and quality of life, researchers reported.

Those who received physician-led, in-home hospital care were "readmitted" to the hospital after an average of 84 days, while patients who received inpatient treatment were readmitted after an average of 70 days, according to MedPage Today.

"Substitutive hospital-at-home care is a viable alternative to traditional hospital inpatient care for elderly patients with acutely decompensated CHF," the study authors wrote in Archives of Internal Medicine. "This type of care demonstrated clinical feasibility and efficacy in comparison with its alternative."

"I'm very pleased with each advancing year. It stems back to when I was forty. I was a bit upset about reaching that milestone, but an older friend consoled me. "Don't complain about growing old - many, many people do not have that privilege." - Earl Warren

Staying Strong in Older Age with Vitamin D Supplements



Keeping your muscles and bones in good condition is a big part of staying active and independent as you get older. The stronger your muscles and bones are, the less likely you are to experience the falls that can affect people, particularly from the age of 65 onwards. This is because your muscles and bones play an important role in your posture, balance and mobility. The good news is, you can enhance your muscle strength and bone density, and reduce your risk of falling, by taking regular Vitamin D supplements.

Why start taking Vitamin D supplements?

It's not uncommon for your body's Vitamin D levels to decrease as you get older. This can happen if you spend less time outside in the sun, which is one of the main sources of Vitamin D. Taking Vitamin D supplements is a positive way to boost your body's Vitamin D levels and strengthen your muscles.

For those in Residential Care

Vitamin D supplements are available to anyone living in a residential care facility. Check with your doctor to make sure they are suitable for you, and to get a prescription. All it takes is one 1.25mg tablet once a month to boost your Vitamin D levels.

How does Vitamin D work to prevent falls?

Vitamin D has been shown to increase the number and size of type II muscle fibres, which play an important role in balance and mobility. Vitamin D also helps maintain the strength of your bones.

Are there any other health benefits of taking Vitamin D supplements?

Low Vitamin D levels have been linked to many chronic conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, respiratory diseases, Type II diabetes and some cancers.

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