

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

NDSU EXTENSION SERVICE

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Powerful Tools for Caregivers Program Improves Well-Being of Family Caregivers in McIntosh County 2017

The Situation

The vast majority of older North Dakotans want to stay living in their home as they age. In 2013, North Dakota had 62,100 family caregivers who provided 58 million hours of unpaid care valued at \$860 million. These family caregivers provide a range of daily activities, such as transportation, personal care, managing finances, grocery shopping, and much more. Caregiving can be a rewarding experience, but can also be filled with enormous physical, emotional, and financial challenges. It is essential for caregivers to maintain their own health and well-being while managing caregiving responsibilities. Yet, most caregivers receive little or no training to care for themselves.

Extension Response

The *Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) Program* is a national evidence-based program which was brought to North Dakota by the NDSU Extension Service.

During May/June 2017, Karen Bettenhausen, along with Dorothy Schubert, Co-facilitator volunteer, provided the program for 6 participants at the Wishek Living Center. During October/November 2017, Karen and Dorothy again provided the program for 6 more participants at Zion Lutheran Church, Ashley. Karen and Dorothy co-taught the six-week series of 90-minute sessions, covering a variety of topics and providing more than 35 tools for the caregiver to put in their “caregiver toolbox”. Topics included: • Taking Care of Yourself • Identifying and Reducing Personal Stress • Communicating Feelings, Needs and Concerns • Communicating in Challenging Situations • Learning From our Emotions • Mastering Caregiving Decisions. Each participant received *The Caregiver Helpbook, Third Edition*, with additional information covering: making tough caregiving decisions; spouses and partners as family caregivers; family caregivers in the workplace; caregiving from a distance; and other pertinent topics that provide navigation and support for the family caregiver.

Impacts

During 2017, two workshops were conducted in McIntosh County with a total of 12 participants. Participants who completed the workshop evaluations reported improvements in the following areas:

- 49 percent increase in their confidence in asking for help with tasks needed for caregiving

- 47 percent increase in taking time for themselves without feeling guilty
- 46 percent increase in doing something to make themselves feel better when discouraged
- 55 percent increase in finding positive ways to cope with the stress of caregiving
- 61 percent increase in their ability to find caregiving resources in their area

Survey results indicated participants’ plans to use newly learned “tools” in the future:

- 53 percent plan to use Action Plans
- 53 percent plan to use Positive Self Talk
- 82 percent plan to use “I” messages
- 53 percent plan to use Long Range Goal Planning

Participant Feedback

- “I would strongly recommend this series. It is educational and empowering. I learned some good techniques for communication and personally staying healthy, both physically and mentally.”
- “I felt so alone before the class. Now I am dealing with things more positively.”
- It was just helpful to visit with people in the same situation.”
- “This class not only helped me with caregiving, but also helped me with the loss of a loved one.”

Public Value Statement

Improving the health and well-being of family caregivers can save North Dakotans money by helping them keep their loved ones at home longer and delaying more costly levels of care. Aging in community preserves quality of life for residents and saves money for taxpayers.

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