

# Living Longer Growing Stronger

from the Alaska Commission on Aging

November 2001

The mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging is to ensure dignity and independence for Alaska's seniors and to assist them, through programs and services funded by the Commission, to lead useful and meaningful lives.



**Alaskan Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger** is a monthly publication of the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA)

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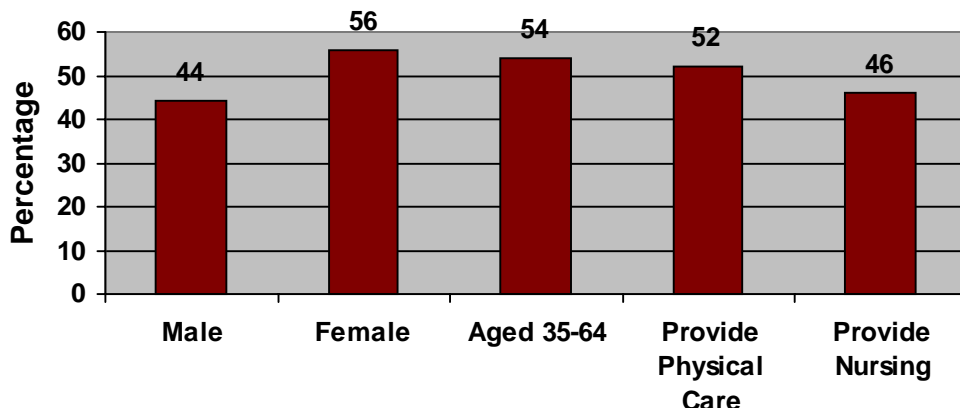
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## Characteristics of Family Caregivers



A survey by the National Family Caregivers Association indicates the number of Americans who provide care for a friend or family member doubled last year. Other findings: more men are taking an active role in caregiving, and providing in-home care significantly affects family income. Physical care includes dressing, bathing and toileting. Nursing includes monitoring vital signs and managing medications.

## November is Family Caregivers Month in Alaska and the Nation

Governor Knowles has declared Family Caregiver Month in Alaska, in conjunction with National Family Caregivers Month. Family Caregivers are the generous, compassionate individuals who face the challenges of caring for loved ones who are elderly, frail, chronically ill, or living with disabilities that restrict their independence. Every day, families assist elderly parents and disabled Alaskans to maintain their quality of life and independence, while also avoiding unnecessary and costly placement in long term care facilities.

According to the National Family Caregiver Association, more than one quarter (26.6%) of the U.S. adult population has provided care to a family member or friend during the past year. That's more than 54 million people! As the the population ages, the number of family caregivers must increase with the need.

Caregivers provide countless hours of unpaid service, care and financial assistance to elderly and disabled Alaskans. These everyday heroes provide millions of dollars' worth of caregiving services each year, reducing the demands on our health care system. At the same time, family caregivers pay an emotional, physical and financial price. Many caregivers deal with stress and health burdens of their own while juggling care for relatives with the demands of work and family.

This issue of *Alaskan Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger* outlines projects to help family caregivers in Alaska funded through the Alaska Commission on Aging.

# Commission Grants Support Family Caregivers

At their autumn quarterly meeting held in Dillingham in September, the Alaska Commission on Aging awarded over \$500,000 for Alaska Family Caregiver Support and Outreach Projects. Funding for these projects began in September and will run through June 30, 2003.

The selected projects will use a blend of funding from the U.S. Administration on Aging and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to identify people who provide care to family members who are disabled senior citizens, or who have Alzheimer's disease or related disorders, assess their needs and assist them in accessing services that will improve, enhance, or prolong the caregiving relationship.

Below are the organizations that have received funding, and a description of each proposed project:

## **Alaska Legal Services Corporation, Anchorage**

Alaska Legal Services Corporation's Family Caregiver Support Project is designed to enhance, improve and prolong the caregiving relationship by addressing the legal needs of caregivers on a statewide basis. The project proposes to accomplish this goal by undertaking several activities aimed at identifying, assessing, and meeting the legal needs of family caregivers. The plan includes outreach to various community service providers who address the needs of seniors and their caretakers, as well as direct outreach to the target population; and providing family caregivers with access to free legal information and direct legal assistance.

## **Alzheimer's Disease Resource Agency of Alaska**

The Savvy Caregiver—An Education Program for Family Caregivers will target primary family caregivers and focuses on improving the *practice* of providing care. The Savvy Caregiver Program seeks to increase the knowledge, skills, and outlook needed for caregiving, reduce the stress and adverse effects associated with caring for someone with dementia and improve the quality of life of family caregivers and their family member. The Program will be implemented in collaboration with the University of Minnesota School of Medicine, Department of Family Practice and Community Health. The Savvy Caregiver Program will reach out to family caregivers currently receiving services and those not yet involved with existing services through print media outreach activities. The Savvy Caregiver Program will be implemented in Anchorage, Fairbanks and the Mat-Su Valley.

## **Catholic Community Services/Southeast Senior Services, Juneau**

Catholic Community Service/Southeast Senior Services (CCS/SESS) will provide a broad range of information and services that will be responsive to the specific needs of individual caregivers over a prolonged period of time. Their continuum of care will consist of an outreach program, a Senior Information Office and Caregiver Resource Center, professional care coordination services, and paraprofessional Rural Care Advocates.

## **City of Bethel**

The City of Bethel, Senior Services Department proposes to expand existing programming by hiring an *Ilakellriit Ikayurta* (Family Helper) to identify and support caregivers in Bethel and four villages that are within 36 air miles of Bethel. The Family Helper will assess the level of need of families, coordinate services such as adult day care, respite, transportation, meal service and/or medical or social services for families in need. The Family Helper will develop program information and facilitate translating it into Yup'ik as needed to help the caregivers and care recipients to understand and cope with individual situations in the best manner possible.

## **Hope Community Resources, Anchorage**

Hope Community Resources (Hope) plans a series of psycho-educational forums and discussions and informational  
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## Family Caregiver Grants (continued from page 2)

presentations that will enhance the caregiver role. This series will be offered within the Anchorage area to family caregivers of adults 60 years of age or older who experience physical disabilities or cognitive impairments. An Outreach Specialist will be hired to collaborate with a licensed psychologist throughout the duration of this program. They will complete an assessment of family caregivers and expand caregiver support currently offered at Hope, creating a series designed to meet the healing needs of caregivers of older adults.

### **Norton Sound Health Corporation, Nome**

Under the direction of the RN Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Coordinator the Family Caregiver Project will identify and offer support services caregivers in Nome and the 15 villages in the Bering Strait Region. The PCA Program's main focus has been on providing assistance to the dependent individual. The addition of a Family Caregiver support component will allow the program to address the needs of caregivers as well as the dependent individual, allowing them to remain in their own home safely and avoid placement in a nursing home.

### **Senior Citizens of Kodiak, Incorporated**

Senior Citizens of Kodiak, in collaboration with Providence Kodiak Island Medical Center and Kodiak Area Native Association plans to identify and conduct needs assessments with caregivers on Kodiak Island, leading to appropriate topics of information to be presented at an island-wide "Aging Connection Conference" in the fall of 2002, with the intention of setting up a Caregiver Resource Center Hotline for Kodiak Island caregivers that would provide consistent and correct information in the spring of 2003.

### **Soldotna Area Senior Citizens, Incorporated**

Soldotna Senior Center proposes to provide outreach and support for family caregivers of persons over 60 with cognitive or physical disabilities and to family caregivers of persons under age 60 with ADRD living in the rural area of South Central Alaska, specifically the Kenai Peninsula. An outreach program will be developed and implemented to identify family caregivers in the area and to determine their support or information needs. Initial networking and gathering of information will be coordinated with senior centers in Soldotna, Kenai, Nikiski, Cooper Landing, Seward, Ninilchik, and Homer. Contacts will be initiated and maintained with physicians and local care providers.

### **Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks**

Family and informal care giving have always been the backbone of the Native culture and their survival. Through the Family Outreach and Caregiver grant, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Home Care Services will identify and survey the informal caregivers of elders 60+ years of age with physical or cognitive disabilities or persons of any ages with Alzheimer's disease or related disorders. The Home Care Staff will travel by road or air to the villages. TCC Home Care Services will compile a village-specific informational system organized into a database for easy access and reference for the elder, family and informal caregiver. TCC Home Care Services will continue on an ongoing basis to listen to the needs of the caregivers and respond to the changing needs.

### **Senior Advocacy Coalition Holds Monthly Teleconferences**

The Senior Advocacy Coalition meets by teleconference from 9:30 to 11:30 AM on the second Friday of every month to address issues affecting Alaska's seniors. The teleconference originates at the Anchorage Senior Center.

For more information on joining a meeting, contact Sue Samet, 261-4140, Lila Berry, 261-4848, or Brenda Brown, 338-6492 in Anchorage; Fred Lau 235-7355 in Homer; or Rosemary Hagevig 463-6153 in Juneau.

