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Learn about programs and services available to seniors by visiting www.homage.org.



From left are Sebastian Taralli, his wife and caregiver, Francesca Taralli, Ruth Egger, a family caregiver specialist at Homage, and John Stanford, a senior companion volunteer. (Ian McCabe photo)

Caregivers often need help with their own well-being

By Ian McCabe
Special to The Herald

According to a National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP report, nearly a quarter of households in the United States include someone who is a caregiver for a person 50 or older. Almost 85 percent of those caregivers are family members volunteering within their own homes to care for loved ones with disabilities or chronic conditions, such as dementia.

For many, caregiving is an all-consuming role that requires them to either supervise or directly meet the needs of their loved ones. Caregivers often do this without recognition, assistance or time for themselves. This causes not only stress and financial hardship, but also depression, isolation and exhaustion, according to the Caregiving in the U.S. report

But help is available. Homage Senior Services offers programs to support caregivers within Snohomish County, including educational workshops and seminars, support

groups, care management consultations and caregiver-focused events, as well as referrals for respite care and other services.

"It's a lot of work, both emotionally and physically, especially for older caregivers," said Ruth Egger, a family caregiver specialist at Homage.

Caregivers may be constantly afraid their loved ones are going to fall or wander away, for instance. "There's always a sense of worry and never a chance to relax," Egger said. "They need relief, so that's where we come in."

For example, Homage can provide in-home care for up to five hours per week, safety aids and accessories like a grab bar for a bathroom, house cleaning and massage services so that caregivers can take a much-needed break. Some of these services are free or discounted for unpaid caregivers.

John Stanford, 75, of Everett, knows exactly what caregivers go through. For years, he was the primary caregiver for his wife, Karen, who is living with frontotemporal

dementia.

Stanford now volunteers through Homage as a Senior Companion to fellow seniors who still live at home but who need help on occasion.

"I'm glad I've had the opportunity to befriend them, to share our experiences, talk together, eat together and even play bingo together," Stanford said. "It's about sharing experiences, that's what this program is. I feel good that I can contribute to their lives. (All they have to do) is just pick up the phone, no matter what time it is."

One of his companions is 101-year-old Sebastian Taralli, of Everett. But perhaps the person who benefits most from his volunteer time is Sebastian's wife and family caregiver, Frances.

"When you tell somebody what you're going through, nobody really understands unless they go through it themselves," said Frances Taralli, 77.

"You're doing the role of two people, and it can stress you out. So,

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Generosity shouldn't go unmatched

Whitesells offer gift for home repair program, if others donate, too.

By Niki Strachila
Marketing & Communications Specialist, Homage Senior Services

Linda Whitesell has dedicated much of her life to helping older adults. For more than 50 years, Whitesell served as a geriatric nurse practitioner and, after retiring in 2009, became a volunteer delivery driver for Homage's Meals on Wheels program.

For five years, Whitesell provided homebound residents with weekly meals. It was along her many stops and routine visits that she discovered the importance of Homage's Minor Home Repair program.

"One of my clients was an elderly widow. She had a wood porch that had become rotten to the point where she was afraid to go outside," Whitesell said. "I encouraged her to call the Minor Home Repair



Linda and Dave Whitesell have invited others to match their \$5,000 donation for Homage's Minor Home Repair program. (Homage photo)

program. They came out and repaired the porch. While they were there, they did a thorough inspection of the home and found several other safety issues, which they fixed. The client was so grateful and pleased. I'm convinced this saved her from injury and allowed her to continue living independently."

Whitesell recently got in touch

with Homage Senior Service's Philanthropy department to see how she and her husband, Dave, could help Homage and its clients this holiday season. When Whitesell heard the Minor Home Repair program was facing a lengthy 245-person waitlist and limited

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Generosity: Couple invites matching donations

Yes, I want to help with a donation today
so my gift to Minor Home Repair is doubled

Enclosed is my gift in the amount of: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Email _____

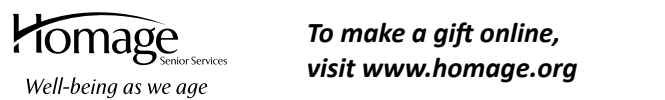
If paying by credit card (VISA, MC, Discover, Amex)**

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____ CRV# _____

Name of Cardholder _____

Cardholder Signature _____

Mail to: Homage Senior Services: 11627 Airport Rd., Suite B, Everett, WA 98204



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funding, she and Dave were determined to make a difference.

“We want a good quality of life for seniors and people living with disabilities, and this program helps those in need maintain their dignity and independence while leading full and enjoyable lives,” Linda said.

The Whitesell family decided to offer a \$5,000 gift with the stipulation that it be matched dollar for dollar by donors. They hope that by asking for matches and sharing their story, more money will be raised for the Minor Home Repair program.

“This year, we received 33 percent less government funding for these essential home repairs. Private

donations will fill the gap and allow us to continue serving our low income seniors and disabled homeowners who’ve been waiting for months for help,” said Alison Barnes, lead Minor Home Repair Program assistant. “Since March, we’ve had to turn away more than 130 requests due to lack of funding.”

To kick off the campaign to match the Whitesell gift, Homage reached out to staff, its board of directors, donors and volunteers. The organization has received amazing support so far but is looking to the greater Snohomish County community to help meet its goal of \$5,000. Gifts of any amount are gratefully accepted and will go directly to the Minor Home Repair program.

Donations can be submitted online at www.homage.org or by sending cash or check to Homage Senior Services, 11627 Airport Road, Suite B, Everett, WA 98204-8714.

Donors must specify their gift is for the Whitesell Match, and donations must be submitted by Dec. 31. For information, contact Christina Mychajliw, 425-265-2294.

For more than 40 years, Minor Home Repair has assisted low and moderate income older adults and people with disabilities who own their homes.

The repair team provides health and safety repairs for individuals when they can’t perform them due to lack of funds or physical limitations.

To learn more about the Minor Home Repair program, visit www.homage.org/home-repair.

Caregivers: Programs help relieve pressures

FROM PAGE 1

to have John to talk to is wonderful. Being the same age, we have a lot in common, so we share stories about growing up. Most importantly, he’s been a great friend and support for us.”

For the Tarallis, Homage provided an emergency-alert necklace with a call button, which allows husband and wife to communicate with each other when they are apart.

“I’ll wear it if I’m going to the store, or he’ll wear it if goes out for a walk down the street,” Frances Taralli said. “I can stay in the house by myself, and if he falls and I can’t see him, he just presses the button and lets me know.”

While Homage provides invaluable

relief for caregivers, Egger says that more needs to be done. Case in point is what happened with Stanford and his wife.

When caring for his wife became too difficult for Stanford on his own, he had no option but to place her in an adult family home at his own expense.

“It’s a big problem in this country, not to be able to support unpaid caregivers who are really saving the country a lot of money,” Egger said. “If we had more support that we could have offered John in the home, he may have been able to keep his wife there with him.”

Egger said it’s incredible what those like Stanford and Taralli do for their loved ones.

“People keep saying to me, ‘You’re

doing an amazing job,’ and I wonder why they say that,” Frances Taralli said. “But then I think about it, and I must be doing something right because he’s gotten to 101. It kind of makes you feel good. A lot of that is thanks to Homage.”

Here are some of the support services available through Homage:

Caregiver support. The Family Caregiver Support Program helps caregivers care for loved ones while meeting their own needs — be they mental, physical or emotional. A specialist works with you to find community resources to support you in your caregiving role. Call 425-290-1240 or email caregiver@homage.org for information.

Need a break? The Lifespan Respite Program offers vouchers for

unpaid caregivers to take a break from the demands of caregiving. If you provide 40 or more hours per week of care, you may apply for a \$1,000 voucher that can go toward respite services provided by a contracted agency that meets state requirements. Limit of one application per year. Call 425-740-3788 or email Linda Porter at lporter@homage.org.

Senior companionship. The Senior Companion Program assists seniors who live at home with chores, such as shopping, paying bills and running errands. In addition to help around the house, volunteers provide friendship and a break for caregivers. Do you need help? Or want to be a senior companion? Call 425-879-7050 or email Mary Higgins mhiggins@homage.org.

Visit homage.org for information about any of these services.

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