



When you need a break

Delaware Lifespan Respite Care Network

For Immediate Release

Date: August 16, 2010

FAMILY CAREGIVERS RECEIVE HELP AS SUPPORT PROGRAM MARKS FIRST ANNIVERSARY

(New Castle) – More than 100 Delawareans caring for family members with disabilities have received respite care assistance through a privately-funded program that just completed its first full year. The services of the Delaware Lifespan Respite Care Network were launched July 1, 2009 to help family caregivers find and pay for respite care. Respite refers to a temporary break from the extraordinary demands of providing constant care to a loved one with disabilities or conditions associated with aging. Research shows that caregiving responsibilities often result in increased stress, physical health issues, financial strain, and family conflicts.

Brenda Richards of Milford is one of the 64 people awarded funds through the program this year to help her pay for respite care. Her 71-year-old husband has Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. Brenda has done her best to care for her husband at home, and since 2007, has had a professional caregiver come to her home on a regular basis. However, Brenda had been thinking about taking a trip to Maine to visit her elderly father. With the financial assistance she received from the Delaware Lifespan Respite Care Network, Brenda traveled to New England and spent a weekend in June with her father.

Another recipient of the Network's funds is a Newark woman raising two grandchildren, one of whom has been diagnosed with Autism and ADHD. She has used her 7-year-old grandson's teacher as their respite care provider. The boy adores her, trusts her, and feels comfortable with her. The caregiver remarked that to her and her husband, respite means "a little time to enjoy each other's company, or go to dinner and not rush through a meal; to just breathe for a few minutes and not worry about the things that are waiting around the corner."

The Delaware Lifespan Respite Care Network is the product of efforts that began in 2003 with a report by the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) that focused on the critical need for respite care in Delaware. Building on the report's momentum, Easter Seals Delaware & Maryland's Eastern Shore spearheaded the formation of the Delaware Caregivers Support Coalition, a group of about 25 organizations and individuals. The coalition studied the respite issue further, conducted surveys, and published a report in 2005 with recommendations. That same year, the CDS received a grant from the Governor's Commission on Community-Based Alternatives for Individuals with Disabilities to develop an operational plan for a statewide respite care system. The CDS worked with the coalition to develop a plan, which was presented to the Governor's Commission in 2007. In 2008, the coalition received three-year funding for the Network from Longwood Foundation, Welfare Foundation, and the Delaware Community Foundation. At that time, the coalition—which oversees the Network—designated Easter Seals Delaware & Maryland's Eastern Shore as the lead agency and fiscal agent for the group.

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The Network is open to Delawareans who are caring for children or adults of all ages and disabilities. The services offered are comprised of two primary components: 1) Information & Referral and 2) financial assistance. Referrals to respite care providers statewide are accessed by searching the *RespiteOnline* searchable database or by dialing a toll-free phone number and speaking with a specialist who directs callers to resources and referrals that meet their needs. The *RespiteOnline* link and the telephone numbers are available at www.delrespit.org. The financial assistance is in the form of small grants to families, who fill out an application requesting up to \$500 per care recipient per year.

From July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010, the Network facilitated 392 online respite care searches, conducted 82 in-depth information and referral cases, and awarded \$52,550 to 96 people caring for 110 family members ranging from 8 months old to 92 years old. The funds allowed these family caregivers to receive a total of 3,955 hours of respite during the first-year period.

All financial assistance monies have already been awarded for the 2010 calendar year, so the Delaware Lifespan Respite Care Network is currently accepting names for a waiting list. If additional funds become available this year, the Network will contact the individuals on the waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis. Families can continue receiving help *finding* respite care through the Information & Referral component of the Network's services. There will be a new pool of financial assistance dollars available for 2011, and applications for these funds will be available by January 1, 2011.

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The Delaware Caregivers Support Coalition was formed in 2003 to continue discussions on the issue of respite care in Delaware. The Coalition continues to serve as an Advisory Committee to the project, and several subcommittees have been established to address specific topics. For more information on the Delaware Lifespan Respite Care Network, call 302-324-4444 ext. 2078 or visit www.delrespit.org.

Easter Seals offers a range of services, including outpatient rehabilitation therapy, early intervention services for children, day services for adults with physical disabilities and cognitive disabilities and assistive technology services to increase the functional capabilities of people with disabilities. For more information about Easter Seals, call 800-677-3800 or visit www.de.easterseals.com.