

Spotlight on Aging

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A newsletter for D.C. Seniors

November 2017



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

By Laura Newland
Executive Director, D.C. Office on Aging

This month is Alzheimer's Disease Awareness and Caregivers Month. I'm excited to share a guest submission from our very own Aurora Delespin-Jones, program manager for the D.C. Office on Aging (DCOA). Aurora has dedicated her career to serving District residents, and was the 2016 winner of the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Award for Distinguished D.C. Government Employees. She brings creativity, compassion and leadership to her role here at DCOA, and I'm grateful to have her lead a team that works passionately with all our community partners to deliver programs that matter to our seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers.

It's a privilege to share her words of inspiration with all of you, as we are fortunate to receive them so often from her as we work tirelessly to be an agency of people serving people, from the heart.

To all caregivers, thank you for what you do, day in and day out. Thank you for spreading kindness as you improve the quality of life for those you care for. Know that you are not alone in your journey and DCOA is here to support you. We are honored to celebrate you, not just during the month of November, but every day of the year!

Aging is living!
Laura Newland



GUEST COLUMN

By Aurora Delespin-Jones
Program Manager for the D.C. Office on Aging

Wow, how time flies! On Oct. 18, 2017, I celebrated what would have been my mother's 102nd birthday. It seems like an eternity, yet only yesterday since I heard her voice calling my name; felt her warmth as she held me tightly during night turnings; saw her infectious smile affirming daily her unconditional love for me; and more importantly, what I interpreted as her gratefulness for the care she received in her home from her immediate and church families, paid caregivers and friends.

In retrospect, my heart aches without her, but the prospect of the impact this article may have in helping someone move forward with hope through the caring process for a loved one with dementia or a debilitating illness is overshadowing my pain.

My mom's challenge with renal failure, high blood pressure, and heart attacks were minor in the scheme of

things compared to our challenge with her dementia. You see, I could give her a pill and monitor her diet and exercise to control the former; however, there was no band-aid large enough to cover the expansive open wound of dementia. Nor was there a topical potion to dry up the continuous and uncharacteristically oozing of behaviors mom displayed.

The purse that rested on the nightstand behind the lamp by her bedside each day would later be lost frequently and found in the oddest places. Or what we referred to as her "Three Faces of Eve" — frustration, emotional outbursts or gratefulness — would show up almost simultaneously at meal, bath or bedtimes, on days she was not willing to comply with anything and confused by everything!

Oh, how I love her even the more as I share, and the tears I am shedding are of joy because I seized each op-

Thank You to Commission on Aging Chairs



Commission on Aging Chairperson Romaine Thomas and Vice Chairperson Ron Swanda completed their terms last month. We appreciate their dedication and advocacy on behalf of older District residents and their caregivers.

The D.C. Office on Aging salutes Chairperson Romaine Thomas and Vice Chairperson Ron Swanda for 12 combined years of service, advocating on behalf of District seniors, and leading the 15-member Commission on Aging, as they completed their terms last month.

During their tenure, Chairperson Thomas and Vice Chairperson Swanda served as the voice in the community, testifying at hearings on issues most important to older Washingtonians, promoting policy, and supporting the Office on Aging in the community.

Under their leadership, the Commission on Aging brought together public officials, business leaders, faith leaders, stakeholders and members of the community for meaningful discussions on aging issues at their monthly meetings and annual retreat. Their hard work and dedication helped lead Washington D.C. toward becoming the best city in the world to age!

Commissioners on Aging are appointed by the Mayor with advice from the Council of the District of Columbia, and serve as advisors about aging issues and concerns. Many thanks to Chairperson Romaine Thomas and Vice Chairperson Ron Swanda for their leadership and commitment to older residents and their caregivers in the District of Columbia!

portunity to care. And I optimized every resource at my disposal, with a limited budget to ensure my mom had the best in the comfort of her home.

Balancing the responsibility of two homes, a career, a robust ministry and family on a high-wire was draining then, and now satisfying, because I found a way to get it all done! And I've used the lessons learned to coordinate my own care-web (*a coordinated sys-*

tem of supports, services and resources, scripted for caregivers) to follow when I need care. So, this is my prospect of helping other care providers for people with Alzheimer's or dementia.

Caring is critical for people with dementia, and more critically important for the unpaid care provider. You must find time outside the daily rou-

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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR



Mayor's Annual Senior Holiday Celebration

Save the Date

**Wednesday,
December 13, 2017
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**
(doors open at 9:30 a.m.)

**Tickets available at your local senior site or by calling
202-535-1395.**

D.C. Armory • 2001 East Capitol St. SE • Washington, D.C. 20032

Guest column

From page 30

tine for respite. You must find balance by establishing boundaries for your own wellbeing during the journey.

It is a researched fact that many caregivers, especially women, suffer from poor health and die prematurely due to lack of self-care. Statistically speaking, if you are one of the 43.5 million estimated unpaid caregivers in America, count yourself important enough to get regular check-ups, take long soothing baths, block out time for a monthly movie with popcorn and the works!

Take advantage of every available discount or free service you can to meet the needs of you and the care recipient. Share with others as often as you can to pour out toxic feelings of guilt, loneliness, frustration and social deprivation. And replenish yourself with tools to cope and new methodologies to try as shared by others. Make a list of your own care providers, med-

ications, physicians and care preferences to ease the burden and ensure your wishes are met if you become ill.

Engage in laughter, be silly at times, and watch a lot of comedies for a cure. Take up a hobby, try to be a social butterfly, and dance when you can. This will help strengthen you in living well. And, when the winds of frustration blow hard and the despair of the inevitable becomes a reality, you will be better prepared to stand firm on the high-wire!

In recognition of Alzheimer's Awareness Month, I salute and honor all care providers. I acknowledge your labor of love and dedicated spirit — and ask that you care for yourselves more deeply.

Please know that we at the D.C. Office on Aging are in it with you. You are not alone! I am appreciative of this opportunity for retrospection, and the prospectus of encouraging you again as you move forward in the care process. Until then, love yourself as you love others.

Still in one peace!
Aurora

Spotlight on Aging

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The Office on Aging is in partnership with the District of Columbia Recycling Program.

Get Involved

November events

**Monday, Nov. 6
noon to 1 p.m.**

Community presentation on D.C. Office on Aging's Resources and Services by Alice Thompson, Community Outreach Specialist, Team Lead
Gethsemane Baptist Church
5119 4th St. NW – Ward 4

**Tuesday, Nov. 7
10:45 to 11 a.m.**

U.S. Vets Community Presentations & Resource Fair/Workshop
152 Wayne Place SE
Contact: Linda Clark-Holland, 202-573-2790

**Tuesday, Nov. 7
noon to 1 p.m.**

D.C. Caregivers Online Chat at Noon
Topic: Taking care of someone with Alzheimer's
<http://dcoa.dc.gov/page/caregiver-chat>

**Wednesday, Nov. 8
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Homes for Hope, Inc. Lincoln Heights 2nd Annual Senior Day
25 53rd St. NE – Basement Level
Contact: Elder Ronald Williams, 202-733-3492

**Tuesday, Nov. 14
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

U.S. Citizens and Immigration Services
2017 Health Benefits and Wellness Fair
111 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Contact: Linda J. Greene, 202-233-2586

**Thursday, Nov. 16
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

Train to Become a DCOA Ambassador
500 K St. NE
Contact: Darlene Nowlin, 202-727-8364
darlene.nowlin@dc.gov

**Thursday, Nov. 16
6 to 7:30 p.m.**

NARFE seminar on the Federal Health Insurance Open Season
IONA, 4125 Albemarle St. NW
Contact: 202-518-2519
ansul2032@verizon.net

**Friday, Nov. 17
noon to 2 p.m.**

Community Resource Fair
Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
1334 29th St. NW – Ward 2
Contact: Alice Walker, ajw11921@gmail.com

**Saturday, Nov. 18
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

MidCity Career Fair in Collaboration with DOES
Israel Baptist Church
1251 Saratoga Ave. NE – Ward 5

**Monday, Nov. 20
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**

Gateway Neighborhood Association
Community Presentation on D.C. Office on Aging's Resources and Services by Alice Thompson, Community Outreach Specialist, Team Lead
Victory Christian Baptist Church
3100 Adams St. NE – Ward 5
Contact: janet_drew@grassley.senate.gov

**Nov. 21
Noon to 1 p.m.**

D.C. Caregivers Online Chat at Noon
Topic: Caring for the caregiver.
<http://dcoa.dc.gov/page/caregiver-chat>

**Wednesday, Nov. 22
9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

Safeway Feast of Sharing
Walter E. Washington Convention Center
801 Mt. Vernon Place, NW – Ward 2
Contact: Caroline Kuo 202-715-7984

**Wednesday, Nov. 29
10:00 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

D.C. Office on Aging in Collaboration with the Kennedy Recreation Center
1401 7th St. NW – Ward 6
Contact: Julio Perez 202-671-4792

**Thursday, Nov. 30
Registration 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.**

Conference Starts at 8 a.m.
Caregiving Outside of the Box 2017
Kellogg Conference Hotel at Gallaudet
800 Florida Avenue, NE – Ward 5
CEUs are available
Contact: Susan Sheppard 202-882-1160

Join the Commission on Aging

Are you interested in serving your community as an aging advocate? Apply to represent your ward as a commissioner for the District of Columbia Commission on Aging.

The Commission on Aging is a citizen's advisory group to the Mayor, Council of the District of Columbia, Office on Aging, and the general public on the needs and concerns of older Washingtonians. The Commissioners serve

as advocates on behalf of the District's 107,000+ seniors, and accomplish their responsibilities through outreach to individuals and institutions, as well as to groups and governments.

The Commission's 15 members are appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the Council of the District of Columbia. Eight of the appointees must be 60 years of age or older.

To apply to become a member, contact the Mayor's Office of Talents and Appointments at elizabeth.keeton@dc.gov.