

Take a Break – Take a Day Trip

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On an airplane, an oxygen mask descends in front of you. What should you do? The first rule is to put on your own oxygen mask before you assist anyone else. Only by first helping ourselves can we effectively help others. For a caregiver the same rule should apply. Today one quarter of adults in this country are caring for an aging parent or relative, with 45% of this group providing care for their spouse. While family caregiving is often very rewarding and a bonding experience, it can also be very stressful. Caring for yourself is one of the most important – and one of the most often neglected – things you can do as a caregiver.

One of the best ways to help manage the stress of caregiving is to take a much needed break. With so much to do and see in Western Michigan it's easy to take a day and have some fun. And the best part is that you don't have to travel very far to enjoy one of the many special places to visit.

Grand Rapids is a perfect destination for those seeking an easy and enriching day trip excursion.

Always an enjoyable stop, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum is considered one of the most entertaining of the nation's presidential museums. Permanent exhibits include an Oval Office replica, an authentic Vietnam-era UH-1 Huey helicopter and the actual staircase that sat on top of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. President Ford's gravesite is located on the grounds of the museum and visitors are invited to pay their respects during regular museum hours.

Experience the new Grand Rapids Art Museum which opened in October 2007. This 125,000 square-foot facility received national attention as the first newly-built LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) in the world. The museum showcases an impressive permanent collection spanning Renaissance to Modern Art.

One of the Midwest's most popular tourist attractions is the Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park. The Sculpture Park features significant works of art within a variety of natural settings connected by waterways, meandering paths and quiet walkways.

Michigan's Lakeshore offers a picturesque region dominated by the influence of Lake Michigan. This vast body of water casts a unique spell on the climate and recreation of the area.

Holland pays tribute to its European heritage with, among other things, an authentic reproduction of an 1800s Dutch village complete with architecture, canals and spectacular gardens. Holland is also home to the Tulip Time Festival, named America's Best Small-Town Festival by *Reader's Digest* magazine. Muskegon turns the spotlight on the region's maritime history with naval and lighthouse museums. The Great Lakes Naval

Memorial and Museum allows visitors to step back in time and tour a WWII submarine, the USS Silversides, and a Prohibition-Era Coast Guard Cutter, the USCGC McLane. Grand Haven is a classic resort town with more than two miles of waterfront boardwalk starting at the city marina and ending at the city pier and lighthouse. Saugatuck, one of the nation's Top 10 Arts Destinations, is home to sophisticated galleries, boutiques, as well as one of the world's Top 25 beaches. Information on other possible Western Michigan day trips is available from the Grand Rapids/Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau at www.VisitGrandRapids.org.

With something to offer for everyone, there is no reason to put off that much needed day to do something nice for yourself. In addition, the Caregiver Resource Network can provide caregivers with helpful resources in finding Adult Day Care services or In-Home Respite services to ensure your loved ones are in good hands while you're out for the day. Please visit the CRN website at www.caregiverresource.net for more information.

Remember, if you don't take care of yourself, you will never be able to continue taking care of your loved one. So take the time today to arrange a day just for you.

Caregiver's Corner is provided as a public service of the **Caregiver Resource Network**. The Caregiver Resource Network is a collaboration of West Michigan organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community. Funded by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan with Older American's Act Title III-E, Family Caregiver Support funds. For more information consult our website at www.CaregiverResource.net or call toll free at 1-888-456-5664.