

Celebrating Books for Caregivers
Jane DeVries, Reference Librarian
Grand Rapids Public Library

Celebrating books – what exactly does that mean? Different things to different people. We may think of that latest bestseller we can't wait to delve into, the intriguing biography or spectacular art book we recently came across at the library, or perhaps that rare find at our favorite used book store. Books entertain and educate us on every subject imaginable, while enriching our souls as we find ourselves lost in their magic. Many of us can't imagine our lives without them.

But how can books help in the caregiving journey? As the number of caregivers grows, publishers are responding to their needs by providing a wealth of information on caregiving-related issues. Caregivers may not be aware of the vast number of books available to them on topics ranging from general caregiving issues to learning specific coping skills to deal with the changes and emotions caregivers go through, in addition to titles covering end of life issues, health issues, financial and legal concerns, titles focusing on independent living and home care, long term care and assisted living, as well as personal memoirs.

Reading about other people who are going through, or have gone through, what you are experiencing can be very affirming in the caregiving journey. One book of note, recently chosen as one of the 2009 Michigan Notable Books, is *Measure of the Heart: A Father's Alzheimer's, a Daughter's Return* by Mary Ellen Geist. The Geist family's story provides an interweaving of practical information within the personal reflections. The Grand Rapids Public Library, the Caregiver Resource Network, and the West Michigan Region's Alzheimer's Association are partnering to bring this author to the Main Library on Tuesday, November 10, where she will speak about her experiences and thoughts as she followed her heart in returning home to Michigan to help her parents.

Many caregivers hope to keep their loved ones at home as long as possible. The latest addition to a series addressing this issue is *The Comfort of Home for Chronic Liver Disease: A Guide for Caregivers* with other titles focusing on various conditions such as Alzheimer's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's and Stroke. When faced with difficult decisions, the new book *Jane Brody's Guide to the Great Beyond: A Practical Primer to Help You and Your Loved Ones Prepare Medically, Legally, and Emotionally for the End of Life* may provide some direction. Another new comprehensive title is *You and Your Aging Parents: The American Bar Association Guide to Legal, Financial, and Health Care Issues*. Additional informative titles can be found at the following web site:
www.grpl.org/wiki/index.php/Caregiving_Resources.

Perhaps you feel you just don't have the time to sit down with a book. However, as caregivers, we all know how important it is to take care of ourselves first. A newly published book by Leeza Gibbons addresses that issue. *Take Your Oxygen First: Protecting Your Health and Happiness While Caring for a Loved One with Memory Loss* focuses on ways in which caregivers can educate and empower themselves, maintaining their own energy by caring for their mind, body and spirit. Taking care of yourself includes exercising and eating right, topics on which the library has many books. It may also include finding a few moments to relax with a good book. Many titles are available on cd, cassette, as well as downloadable options.

“Connecting people to the transforming power of knowledge” is the mission statement of the Grand Rapids Public Library. This can be accomplished in many ways, by connecting you to the appropriate community resource for your particular information needs or by connecting you to the right book as

you confront various caregiving issues, providing titles to inform you in your decision-making process, as well as titles for relaxation and respite.

You may feel very alone in your caregiving journey. There are, however, many organizations that exist to help, so that you, in the words of the Caregiver Resource Network's motto, "don't have to walk the caregiver path alone." Next time you're searching for a book to inform or entertain you, or you're not quite sure where to turn for assistance, let the experts at your public library help you find that resource. Remember, knowledge is power and your newly-acquired knowledge may contribute to a celebration of life in your role as a caregiver.

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.