

Banner

TODAY'S NEWS TODAY

Care of elderly relative a problem for many

By Becci Bookner
Special to the Banner

Imagine the plight of the busy career person struggling for success in the business world, while trying to effectively balance the responsibility of school-age children on the one hand and an elderly or housebound relative on the other.

Child care has become almost a natural part of the working world and there are many facilities developing to provide a safe, supervised environment for children of all ages. In fact, many companies are providing child-care facilities or other assistance as an employee benefit. That is one of the great progressive achievements of our generation.

Unfortunately, less has been accomplished in providing care for the elderly, and the burden which this can become for a working family member is awesome. Elder care can be a serious handicap to an otherwise productive employee, and often results in absenteeism, frequent phone calls and poor productivity for the employee who is constantly concerned and distracted by the needs of the elderly relative.

If the older family member resides in another area of the country, the problem for the employee becomes even more complex.

Home health care for the sick and elderly has now become commonplace, and many organizations offer nursing care, therapy of various types, and other medical services. Few of the visiting practitioners can take the time to fill other needs of their patients.

Caring for my own senior family members made me see how critical some of these other needs can be, and how important a few simple services can



COMMUNITY VOICES

be to a lonely, often housebound individual. Active, younger members of society do not usually realize how difficult basic activities can be for an older person.

A trip to the doctor's office, to church, to the grocery store, can be a traumatic problem for the elderly. A leisurely drive in the country is often out of the question. Lunch in a restaurant is probably a fond but distant memory, as is an outing to shop or take in a movie or a ball game on a sunny afternoon.

Such little things we take for granted can make a huge difference in the life of a lonely person.

And, even more basic, elderly people living alone often do not eat right, have poor personal hygiene, and are not as careful as they should be about home security and safety. Many need help in performing simple household tasks for themselves.

We believe that older Americans who choose to live alone in their own homes are the most forgotten segment of our society, and those most in need of our attention and our compassion.

In a time when most households have two working members, there is simply no one with the time to provide the level of family care for the elderly that has always been an American tradition.

Our older Americans deserve more. After all, soon enough we will be among them.

Nashville, Tennessee □ 58 pages, 5 sections

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 3, 1994

Nashville

