



*The mission of Maine PASA is to build recognition and opportunity for the direct care, direct support and personal assistance workforce through education, professional development and public awareness.*

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## Maine PASA Board Appoints an Executive Director

The Maine PASA Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Roy Gedat to the position of Executive Director. The position was advertised in December and recruited many excellent candidates. Roy was selected for his extensive experience in managing a non-profit organization in Maine as well as his first hand experience in direct services. Roy served as the director of the Child Health Center in Norway, Maine for 18 years and was very active with fundraising for Big Brothers Big Sisters programs. He has also been a board member for other organizations. Roy is familiar with direct services through part-time employment in a residential home for people with disabilities, through his agency work, and through his Master's degree in social work. Roy comes to Maine PASA with great recommendations and a track record of collaboration across many service, business and policy groups. The Norway community knows Roy from his November run for the Maine House in District 95. Roy brings terrific experience and energy and will be instrumental in leading the organization and the Board to ensure Maine PASA's mission and contributions to workforce developments in the state. Roy has been busy talking to Maine PASA members and getting to know the grants and projects, and the mission of Maine PASA. Drop him a note and set up a time to talk about Maine PASA and direct services in Maine. You can reach him by e-mail ([rggedat@exploremaine.com](mailto:rggedat@exploremaine.com)), by calling his direct line (207-890-0773), or by calling the Maine PASA toll-free number (800-268-6612).



Roy Gedat  
Maine PASA Executive Director

## Maine PASA Gets Tax Exempt Status

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service approved Maine PASA's application to become a 501c(3) organization in January 2005. This is another important milestone for Maine PASA and follows the serious work done by the Board of Directors to write a mission statement and business plan that tells how the organization will serve its members and the general public. Being approved to be a tax exempt 501c(3) and an incorporated non-profit organization in Maine are important demonstrations of Maine PASA's status and suitability to serve its members, affiliates and funders. This is a responsibility and a trust that the Board and Executive Director will carry out. Maine PASA welcomes contributions, including financial donations for designated support activities. These contributions are now tax deductible! Please contact Roy Gedat, Executive Director, for more information.

## Health Insurance Outreach Help Needed

Maine PASA is concerned about health care coverage for direct care, direct support staff and personal assistants. Our members have told us this is one of their top issues and that it can make the difference between staying in this line of work and leaving to find a job with benefits. We need to find and keep good people in these jobs! And, we know that this is only going to happen if we improve the jobs. One way we can do this is to make sure employers (agencies and consumers) and their direct care and personal assistants have good information and know what the benefit options and costs are.

Maine PASA is working with Consumers for Affordable Health Care and the Health Care for Health Care Workers Initiative, a national effort sponsored by the Paraprofessional Health Care Institute to offer information and support. Employers watch your mail for announcements of meetings in your areas and the Small Business Newsletter with information about DirigoChoice. Maine PASA members: You can help! We are recruiting direct care employees, direct support professionals and personal assistants to attend trainings and assist with outreach that will help other workers to find health coverage. Call Elise 228-8423, or Roy (207-890-0773 or 800-268-6612) to find out how you can help.



### Maine PASA Has A New Mailing Address!

P.O. Box 710  
Norway, ME 04268  
*Portland mail will be forwarded.*

## Checking In With Members

Many Maine PASA members received phone calls from the Board members, the Chapter leaders or Jocelyn Barrett. Forty people answered our calls and our questions. This was a great chance for us to make contact and get feedback on how we're doing.

### What did we learn?

Most people read and enjoy the newsletter (hooray!), most people have not read the website, and many have not seen the Our Stories series. This is helpful for us to know. If you or your employer has access to the Internet, check the website together: [www.maine-pasa.org](http://www.maine-pasa.org) We think you will be impressed with what Maine - and your Association - is offering!

And, we heard that you are very busy working and don't have time to attend events. We also heard that you have concerns about your jobs and co-workers in direct services.

Members' concerns generally fell into the following areas:

### Raising Public Awareness

- "We're getting bad press from dishonest people, we need good stories, too."
- "We need to give people an overall view of mental illness, provide education for people in the community."

### Employee Recognition and Support

- "Give everyone an opportunity to speak, 'once around the table'."
- "We do not get recognized for the good work we do."
- "I want to be with others doing the same work to discuss and have fun."
- "A happy employee is a good employee; we have to be valued."
- "It's not always about the wages. People that do the work should get more support and understanding so they can do their job better."

### Health Insurance

- "It's awful to be in healthcare and not have health insurance."
- "Healthcare is the biggest issue. It makes it hard to find young workers who want to stay in this field."
- "I am approaching retirement and would like to cut back to part time, but I'll lose my health insurance and just can't afford that."

### Low Wages

- "We need higher wages, I make less now than I did when working at a factory in the 70s. But if we raise our wages too high, will we have to charge poor clients more for services?"
- "Having been promoted to CRMA, with more responsibility should come higher wages and more respect but the pay scale is so low at the private facility where I work."
- "We need to have good pay to get people into this job."

### Long Hours/Inconsistent Schedules

- "Our schedules are too inconsistent. I wish we had reliable, steady schedules to work."

### Conflict Resolution

- "We should have support groups. 90 % of the problems are with co-workers. We need time together."

### Burnout

- "I'm concerned about people who were fired up about their jobs but have changed. What can we do about the burnout I see in others?"
- "I'd like someone to talk to on rough days."
- "I need someone to listen to me when I have lost my patience, or am feeling degraded by the environment or person I'm working with."

### Problems at the Legislative Level

- "The State and Government are not doing well to provide and pay the bills."
- "This is not entry level work and it is not an area to save state and federal money when they are downsizing budgets."

### Lack of Training/Outdated Training

- "We should have refresher courses in CNA work, one day seminars to teach new tricks of the trade."
- "We need good training by well qualified people."
- "We need classes on Alzheimer's because more and more consumers are affected."

### Trouble with Management

- "If you don't voice your needs, you're just punching a clock."
- "I feel that management is very insensitive and unfair to in-home workers at my agency."
- "Accessibility to supervisors is a problem."

### Relationships with Consumers and Consumer Family Members

- "Family members can be tough."

### Finding and Keeping Good Workers

- "This is more than just a job."

## How do I contact my Representative or Senator?

Maine House of Representatives in-state toll-free line:  
800-423-2900

Maine Senate in-state toll-free message line:  
800-423-6900

To locate any state official, visit:  
<http://www.maine.gov/portal/government/officials.html>

## Excerpts from "Someone to Care for Caregivers: Karen Bragg's Story"

by Jocelyn Barrett, writer, historian, Maine PASA member

"Someone to Care for Caregivers: Karen Bragg's Story" is the fifth selection in the Our Stories feature. This series is a collection of stories introducing the voice and experience of direct care and direct support workers. The full stories are published on the Maine PASA website at [www.maine-pasa.org](http://www.maine-pasa.org) with excerpts of each published in our newsletters.

*Karen Bragg works as a Caregiver Companion for Elder Independence of Maine (EIM). For the Caregiver Companion Project three EIM employees have been trained as Alzheimer's specialists, working in the homes of consumers who receive support services. The Caregiver Companion's role is to work one on one with family members who provide unpaid care for their loved ones. Karen is a compassionate, thoughtful person who is sensitive to the needs of those she meets with. Her own experience as a family caregiver is what led her down the path to this "dream job," and her genuine compassion and insight into the situation for family caregivers is what makes her excellent at it.*

### Better Relationships, Better Jobs

I'm an Alzheimer's Specialist and I work with the Caregiver Companion program at Elder Independence of Maine. EIM connects people in Maine with home care services, coordinates with families to have PCAs or CNAs come into the home to care for a loved one. When the home care services are being arranged for a consumer with Alzheimer's or dementia, they call me. I go in and work with the primary family caregiver in the home. I give the caregiver a call and ask how they are doing. I say, "How are you doing?" Family caregivers are used to everyone asking, "How's your husband doing? How are services going for him?" No one asks the caregiver if she's doing all right. There's so much going on that the caregiver is forgotten about.

My job is to try to make the family caregiver's job easier in any way I can. Often, since there are new PCAs assigned to the family through EIM, I end up acting as a mediator between the family caregivers and the professional caregivers they have coming into their homes. This is a new experience for the family caregiver, it can be difficult for them to adapt and sometimes there is tension there. I understand how tense the relationship between family and professional caregivers can be because I was a family caregiver for five years.

Being a caregiver for my grandmother changed my whole direction. I didn't finish RN school and I don't regret that at all. I started a home care agency that was run on my philosophies about creating a relationship with family caregivers and with clients. I knew some really good PCAs in the area and recruited some great people. Before we even started I asked them, "Do you know how it felt for me to see PCAs come into my home and go right past my grandmother and never say a word to her, or me? They weren't treating her like a person, and that made me feel even worse because I couldn't do anything about it. I needed them there because I needed help." It was an important awareness, and that awareness helped good PCAs do an even better

job. I really believe that caregivers, clients and PCAs all have to be remembered and respected for things to work out.



### Best Friends™

I often teach the Best Friends™ approach when I'm working with family caregivers. Beyond lending a sympathetic ear or getting a caregiver out of the house for a while, I find that talking them about the Best Friends™ approach can really help them to have better interactions with their loved ones every day. This approach can help people to come to terms with what's happening. What if your husband or your grandmother was the rock of your family, someone you always turned to, someone you could always cry to? It's so hard when you always went to your mom or you always went to your dad or grandparents, you always turned to your husband and suddenly that person is still there, but that source of support is gone. It's a huge loss and they're grieving that.

Usually I don't even meet the client with dementia. I work solely with the caregiver, and try to get her out of the home so she can have a break. If the caregiver wants a better understanding of the Best Friends™ approach, I will actually go in for an afternoon and meet the client and try to role model to help teach the caregiver how it's done. Sometimes Jack is sitting here and he says it's Friday and the wife is frustrated. "It's Thursday, honey. You know it's Thursday." I gently introduce a different idea, which is to accept that Jack really believes it's Friday and by trying to convince him it's not, it may just confuse him and make things tenser. What if we accepted that and tried to let it go? I smile and say, "Yes it's Friday, Jack, it is. And it's a beautiful Friday." I

just let it go, then I redirect. "Your hair looks great" or "Your sweater is so pretty. Are you having a good day?" If the caregiver can let it go and move beyond it, it makes the client more peaceful and can make their interactions much smoother.

Sometimes I meet a caregiver and I know it's not a good situation anymore. For the five years I cared for my grandmother I had nobody to turn to. My husband would say over and over, "You can't do this anymore." The more people would say, "You can't do it," the more I hid things. It would get really bad and I'd be totally burnt out and think "Oh, god, I don't want to let my husband know that I'm having a really hard time." I didn't want to stop being a caregiver to my grandmother. I was the only one who could say that my grandmother needed to go into a nursing home. Caregivers hide a lot; they cover a lot of pain because they don't want to have people say, "You can't do this anymore." What I say to them is, "You can do it for as long as you feel that you are able, but you're the only one who can say, 'Now's the time.' It's not going to be your daughters, not going to be your sons, it's not even going to be the doctor."



### **Giving 100% Every Day**

May 6th of this past year, I had a life-threatening illness and almost died. In some ways, I think I have changed. Whenever I start to get uptight or anxious, a wonderful calmness comes over me. People that know me well have commented that they have noticed a change. When I sit and talk to caregivers facing stress in their lives, I think I am better able to calm and reassure them now. There is laughter and sometimes tears. We talk about memories and how important our memories are. Best Friends™ helps with those memories because if a caregiver can accept that their loved one can't get their memories back, they can at least live peacefully for the rest of their days and make new memories together that the caregiver can keep. I talk to caregivers about memories because each day they spend with their loved one is very precious. I feel like I got the inside scoop on something, you know?

I have lost quite a few caregivers because once the consumer with dementia or Alzheimer's dies, we have to end our work with the caregiver. I had a funeral director tell me something once, and it really helped me when I've lost someone to dying. He said, "Every family that walks in gets 100% of me. I'm there for them 100%. But you know what? There's always another family who's

going to need me. And I'm going to give them 100% of me as well." So I always have to figure out, "What is 100%?" I think it's just giving your time to somebody and letting them know they matter, and that's what I do. I give 100%, but I always know that there is another caregiver and I need to be 100% again for tomorrow.

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## **Special Thanks to Jocelyn Barrett**

The Our Stories project is one year old. During this time, Jocelyn Barrett talked to Maine PASA members and got to know some very impressive direct care and direct support workers and personal assistants. Seven people offered to be interviewed and share their stories with Jocelyn and with us. The Maine PASA website has all seven stories for you to read. This newsletter features "Someone to Care for the Caregivers: Karen Bragg's Story," and coincides with our announcement of funds to support Maine PASA members to attend Best Friends™ training. We have two other wonderful stories to share with you in future newsletters, "An Open and Loving Heart: Susan Tucker's Story" and "Thriving on Challenges: Karen Farrington's Story."

While completing the interviews and multiple drafts Jocelyn was very busy helping Maine PASA with member development. Maine PASA is very appreciative of Jocelyn's fine work to develop and publish the Our Stories project and her outreach to members. While her employment with Maine PASA comes to an end, her membership will continue. The Our Stories series is reaching many people and is an important demonstration of Maine PASA's work and purpose. Thank you, Jocelyn, for giving us a way to be heard and understood.

We also thank Priscilla deBree, Studio 148, the photographer, who so beautifully put a face to the work and workers described in these stories.

The Our Stories Project is finishing up. I started last year at this time, and could never have imagined what a success it would become. We've completed seven stories, each told in a distinct voice. These are stories that need to be heard. I'm amazed when I think that Our Stories shares only seven out of all of your voices. I could choose any of Maine PASA's members and you would have a story that is just as important as those in Our Stories.

Even though Our Stories is coming to an end, I hope that the Maine PASA newsletter can be a place for more of your ideas and stories to be shared. I have enjoyed getting to know you. One thing that I've learned in working this past year is that the heart of Maine PASA is its members, and it's what you bring to the organization that makes us what we are.

*Jocelyn Barrett, February 2005*

## Maine Updates

### State House Activities that Affect Maine PASA Members

by Roy Gedat

The Legislature is in session and the Governor recently delivered another budget that features Medicaid cuts and government restructuring that concern direct service staff who work in homes, institutions and smaller residential living facilities. As details emerge on the impact these cuts will have on elders, people with disabilities, and children in residential care, another controversy is heating up in response to the long planned merger of DHS and BDS.

Home-based and residential services to former BDS clients will be particularly hard hit by funding reductions as attempts are made to move clients into less restrictive and less "expensive" methods of care. Elders are said to be "held harmless" in the budget but the details in changes to MaineCare have yet to emerge clearly.

While advocates attempt to preserve and maintain current service levels a strong effort is being made to shore up and even increase funding levels for homemaker and other home-based services with waiting lists.

The Commissioner of the new super-agency DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) has begun to reveal the structure, which is organized around common intake and interdisciplinary case management of individuals and families. The former bureau for Maine's elderly is nowhere it be found in the new organizational chart and its functions are grouped together with the developmentally disabled into a new office of Elder & Adult Behavioral and Developmental Services.

Advocates and providers of senior services are fighting this effort to combine elder services, long-term care with adult mental health and retardation programs. One bill now before the Legislature directs the creation of a strong bureau-level aging office. There are also many huge budget savings envisioned for efficiencies that will reduce costs of residential care that are very concerning to clients, their families and providers.

Everyone agrees that the creation of the new Department offers a historic opportunity to improve and enhance the complex and diverse service system where PASA members work.

Notice: Just last year Maine established unemployment compensation coverage for part-time workers. The continuation of this coverage is being debated. For more information and to voice your support, you can contact Crystal Bond or Chris Rusnov at Maine Equal Justice at (toll-free) 866-626-7059, x 205.

### Watching Medicaid in Maine

Because many people receiving long term care in Maine rely on Federal and State Medicaid funds direct care and direct support staff and personal assistants can expect to feel the impact of cuts and changes. Maine PASA recommends that members listen and watch, and call us with what you're experiencing on the front lines of caring. Maine Center for Economic Policy ([www.mecep.org](http://www.mecep.org)) and American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR, [www.ancor.org](http://www.ancor.org)) are great resources for budget news.

### Direct Care Worker Coalition Makes A Presentation to the State Administration in December

Coalition members presented a summary of the direct care worker employment situation to key members of the state administration, including Trish Riley, Rebecca Wyke, Catherine Cobb and Pat Ende. Maine PASA members and long-time direct service workers Joyce Gagnon and Mike Jones provided first hand experience with some of the issues that plague direct care and personal assistance work: low wages, unreliable work hours, and employers who can't provide benefits like sick or vacation time. Their employers and other members of the Coalition present their disparaging news about the impact of Medicaid cuts, no cost-of-living adjustments over years to cover the rising costs of operations and the worry of having to compete with call centers offering higher wages and benefits. While the administration responded sympathetically, they did not give any reason for optimism. Since this presentation, direct care workers and agencies have reported a worsening picture with reductions in hours and the growing challenges of providing fewer hours of service to clients whose service hours have been cut. This sets the tone for the Coalition as it prepares its report to the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee in March.

### CD-PAS Work Group Update

by Joyce Gagnon

The Maine Legislature asked the Commissioners of Labor and Human Services to recommend strategies for improving services for the Consumer-Directed Personal Assisted Service (CD-PAS) programs. The working group submitted their recommendations in December 2004.

35 private consumers and individuals from agencies contributed to the report over 4 months. The goal was a shared desire to maximize consumer choice, promote independent living, encourage personal and family responsibility, and offer benefits to a broader population of existing consumers. Achieving these goals will hopefully allow consumers to make more informed choices throughout the intake and follow-up processes.

The working group acknowledges the need for expanding consumer direction to include the use of surrogacy and/or alternative decisionmakers. These could include a consumer who has a guardian may participate in consumer-directed programs provided the guardian is willing to meet all requirements for participation in the programs; and/or a consumer with cognitive capacity as currently defined by rules may participate in the consumer-directed programs by creating a legal relationship, such as a power of attorney, who is willing to meet all the requirements for participation in the program.

Also recommended was the need to address job classification, livable wages and benefits across all programs in order to attract and retain personnel.

With continued support of Maine PASA and other agencies, problems can be addressed and improve the system and enhanced the quality of life for the individuals we are trying to help.

## Maine Updates (cont'd)

### Career Centers in Portland and Lewiston work with DSP employers to support recruiting

A collaboration between the Department of Labor and provider agencies in Maine is forging a cooperative process to inform people of careers in direct support. The process is expected to help people utilizing the Career Center to hear about and apply for direct support jobs with area agencies in southern and western Maine.

### Northern New England LEADS Institute Opens in Maine

LEADS stands for Leadership, Education and Advocacy for Direct Care and Support Staff. The Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) has invited Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire to develop the LEADS programs over the next three years. Home care and long-term care organizations will be selected to participate in training, leadership and public education activities that will demonstrate best practices in employment and person-centered services for consumers/residents. For additional information, please contact Elise Scala at USM's Muskie School (228-8423) or Christa Baade at CEI (882-7552). This initiative is funded by grants from the Jane's Trust and Langeloth Foundations.



**You spoke and we listened!**

#### **Personal Assistants, Caregivers, and Employers:**

Maine PASA Connections is an online listing and information service that connects people who need assistance in their homes with people looking for employment.

Maine PASA invites people who work in personal care and support (PSS, PCA, CNA, HHA, and others) to fill out an online application.

There is no cost to be listed.

Employers can register online to search our database of available workers.

*Finally... the right Connection!*

**Visit our website [www.maine-pasa.org](http://www.maine-pasa.org) and click on "Maine PASA Connections".**

## National Updates

**The National Directcare Clearinghouse** has posted articles on working conditions in consumer directed care and more on their website. Check out their Portrait Gallery!

<http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/news.jsp>

**The Direct Care Alliance** will hold its annual conference December 3-5, 2005, in Orlando Florida. The conference will be co-sponsored by the Pioneer Network, a leader in long-term care initiatives. The theme of the conference will be to celebrate, reward and recognize direct care workers. Fund raising contributions will be needed to support the travel and registration costs for Maine PASA members to attend. Over the next year the DCA will be reviewing strategic efforts to reach out and to support the state-based associations. Please check their website for updates: <http://www.directcarealliance.org>

### DSP Featured in Wall Street Journal Article

*In a Group Home, Caring for Disabled Takes Toll on Ma* was a feature article in the December 15, 2004, edition, page 1A. The article presented the real life and compelling story of Sarah Ahmed. Her story presented the commitment and compassion of the Direct Support Professional and has helped to raise public awareness and appreciation for the demands of the job. To read the article go to: <http://www.namimass.org/news/news04/ad122704.htm> (Point of interest: Ms. Ahmed is described as making \$12.06/hour working in Maryland. This is significantly higher than the average DSP wage in Maine \$9-11/hour.)

### ANCOR Site Presents National Picture

For the latest information on the federal budget, Medicaid and efforts to increase awareness and support of DSPs check this website: [http://www.ancor.org/2004/issues/budget/index\\_president\\_budget.html](http://www.ancor.org/2004/issues/budget/index_president_budget.html)

### Medicaid CMS Administrator Addresses Medicaid Reform

Mark McClellan, chief administrator for the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid spoke about the future of Medicaid during a speech at the 2005 National Health Policy Conference. He said the program is "not just about flexibility, it's about flexibility that works," also saying that the current waiver system is too cumbersome for states to make innovations in their program offerings. According to the journal *Healthbeat*, his comments appeared to indicate that "Medicaid reimbursement ... would be tied in some way to meeting standards for saving money, improving treatment or expanding coverage." *Healthbeat* reports that "[s]igns point" to the replacement of waivers with performance measures "as the procedural hurdle state Medicaid programs would have to clear to adopt programs to save money or widen coverage." McClellan also spoke in favor of making home- and community-based care "an integral part of Medicaid" and promoted disease management and prevention programs. He also advocated allowing parents to use Medicaid funds to pay for children's coverage if they can't afford family coverage through an employer. (See the ANCOR website, above, for the full article.)

## Fund\$ Available to Maine PASA Members for Best Friends™ Training

Maine PASA has received funds to pay members to attend the Best Friends™ Approach to Alzheimer's Care training program. Stipends of \$50.00 per day are available to Maine PASA members who complete the one- or two-day program hours and who are not being paid by their employers to attend. The cost of registration is also covered.

Registration is required, as the number of seats and stipends is limited. Receipts of attendance are to be submitted to Maine PASA for payment.

This training addresses a number of the sources of caregiver strain and dissatisfaction including an emphasis on the importance of the relationship between the caregiver and the person with Alzheimer's and improved skills for handling difficult behaviors. The Alzheimer's Association has organized programs throughout the state.

Advanced registration is as easy as 1-2-3:

1. Check Call Jan Halloran for a program schedule and to register (287-0233 or e-mail [jan.halloran@maine.gov](mailto:jan.halloran@maine.gov) )
2. OR you can also see the program schedule on the Maine PASA's Events page: [www.MainePASA.org/events.htm](http://www.MainePASA.org/events.htm) and call the trainer listed.
3. Call Maine PASA 1-800-268-6612 to request the stipend funds.

Tell your employer about this great opportunity and get the help you need to attend!

The funding to support this program is being provided through the Maine Alzheimer's Project and a grant from the Administration on Aging, Alzheimer's Demonstration Grant. To learn more about Best Friends™, check out "Someone to Care for the Caregiver: Karen Bragg's Story" in this newsletter!

### Books To Share

#### Guide Helps Assisted Living Caregivers Facilitate Resident Independence

*Encouraging Independence, Choice Control and Decision-Making: Ideas for Direct Care Staff.* This guide, which helps assisted living caregivers best facilitate residents' independence, is part of a series of 4 created for assisted living consumers and providers by the Long-Term Care Community Coalition of New York and the Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled.

For copies, go to <http://www.assisted-living411.org>.



## Caregiver Companion Program

by Romaine Turyn

The Caregiver Companion Program is a model program funded by the Maine Alzheimer's Project with funding from the Administration on Aging, Alzheimer's Demonstration Grant to States Program. This unique program, we have been told, is the only one that exists in the country. It is a program designed to provide companionship, support, information and education to caregivers of persons with dementia receiving home care provided by the state's home and community based home care system.

To be eligible for home care services, an individual must be assessed by a nurse and require a certain amount of care in order to demonstrate a need for home care. As part of the assessment, the home environment is reviewed, including the availability of informal care provided by family. Statistics show that family and friends are the primary source, or "backbone," of long-term care provided to people who need assistance to stay at home.

In Maine, the coordination of home care services is done by Elder Independence of Maine, which was instrumental in developing the Caregiver Companion Program. The purpose of the Caregiver Companion program is to support the home care program by providing services to the caregiver of persons with dementia. Often the caregiver is instrumental to the success of keeping someone at home. While the home care program provides services to the person in need, the Caregiver Companions provide individualized support and education to the caregiver through a combination of in-home visits, telephone calls, visits in the community, participating in activities such as gardening, or other activity tailored to meet the needs of the caregiver. The goal is to reduce caregiver stress, burden and identify depression for appropriate referrals source.

Karen Bragg has been a Caregiver Companion with Elder Independence of Maine since the Program started. Make sure to read her story, "Someone to Care for the Caregiver," in this newsletter.



### It's Tax Time! Did You Know...

The Earned Income Tax Credit is for people who work, but don't earn high incomes. If you qualify, it can reduce the tax you owe, or you may even get a refund. To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they did not earn enough money to be obligated to file a tax return. Your eligibility is dependent on several factors such as your filing status, income level, and the number of qualifying children you have, if any. There's a lot to know about qualifying, but the most important thing to know is that you can get help figuring it all out. Go to: <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/index.html> or check with your tax preparer.

## Movie Review: "Assisted Living"

*Fiction Film Dramatizes the Importance of Relationships in Long-Term Care*

*Assisted Living* isn't playing at neighborhood theaters near you, but you might want to catch this story about life in a long-term care facility if you get a chance.

*Assisted Living* tells the story of a relationship between Todd, a slacker custodian in a multi-level facility, and Mrs. Pearlman, a resident who starts out in an assisted living apartment and is moved to a shared room in a special care unit when her dementia progresses. Though it was filmed in five long-term care facilities and real residents appear in many of the smaller parts, it's not a documentary.

The fictional facility appears to be a good one, run by goodhearted and competent people. Animals and the head nurse's young daughter have free run of the hallways. But the routines and rules, the restrictive "choices" (Mrs. Pearlman is repeatedly asked when

she lingers too long at the nursing station: "Do you want to go to your room or do you want to go to Bingo?"), and the unconsciously paternalistic attitudes of many of the staff contribute to an institutional atmosphere. In the end, despite the staff's best efforts, the residents spend most of the day just marking time. In the movie, as in life, it's the relationships that manage to take root in this thin soil that make the facility feel like a true home - at least part of the time. The slowly unfolding friendship between Todd and Mrs. Pearlman and the impersonal environment they find themselves in leave anyone working in long-term care with a lot to think about.

For more information, including an interview with the director about working with the residents in the film and a list of cities where it's being shown, go to:

<http://www.assistedlivingthemovie.com>.



### How to Reach Us

This newsletter has been produced for Maine PASA. Contributors include Roy Gedat, Elise Scala, Lisa Marie Lindenschmidt, Jocelyn Barrett, Joyce Gagnon and Maine PASA members.

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**TTY:** (207) 228-8440 or (800) 809-4501  
**Email:** [rggedat@exploremaine.com](mailto:rggedat@exploremaine.com)  
**Website:** [www.mainepasa.org](http://www.mainepasa.org)



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