

WOMEN'S HEALTH & SAFETY: CAREGIVERS

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We've all heard the phrase "a woman's job is never done." How true!!

Since the inception of our National Women's Committee, I have been fortunate enough to speak with many of our Sisters across the nation. I have heard numerous issues they are facing, but one in specific that grabbed my attention is their role as caregivers to various family members: children, parents, spouse, and others. I can relate to this serious role that they are required to fill because I too am a caregiver for an aging parent.

I wouldn't trade a minute of the time that I share with my elderly Mom. She is well deserving of the royal treatment that a Queen is due. She made immeasurable, loving, sacrifices to raise her tribe of seven. But even within that bubble of love and support, there are times when caregivers do get tired and worn out both physically and mentally.

According to the Family Caregiver Alliance National Center on Caregiving, the value of the informal care that women provide ranges from \$148 billion to \$188 billion annually. Many studies have looked at the role of women and family caregiving. Although not all have addressed gender issues and caregiving specifically, the results are still generalizable to women because they are the overwhelming majority of informal care providers in this country. Consider these statistics:

- An estimated 66% of caregivers are female.
- The average caregiver is a 49-year-old woman who works outside the home and provides 20 hours per week of unpaid care to her mother.
- Although men also provide assistance, female caregivers may spend as much as 50% more time providing care than male caregivers.
- Female caregivers are lax or forgo their own healthcare needs.

Sisters, we have to take time to care for ourselves. We must allow time to "pamper" ourselves. If we don't, the daily duties of our job can lead to health problems such as stress, hypertension, and diabetes to name a few.

If you are the primary or only caregiver for someone away from your USPS employment, you should seek out resources to



help alleviate some of the responsibilities you have. Because of the multi-faceted role that family and informal caregivers play, they need a range of sup-

port services to remain healthy, improve their caregiving skills, and remain in their caregiving role. Caregiver support services include information, assistance, counseling, respite, home modifications or assistive devices, support groups and family counseling.

While many services are available through local government agencies, service organizations, or faith-based organizations, don't be afraid to utilize the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Speak to your union representatives regarding the importance of utilizing Family and Medical Leave and/or Sick Leave for Dependent Care. These are valuable protections that will aid you while caring for your love ones.

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The NPMHU Women's Committee will be having its second official meeting at the conclusion of the August SAMLU Meeting being held in Washington, DC. As a result of numerous inquiries about acquiring an official Women's Committee polo, President Hogrogian has approved the production of this highly sought item of clothing. The shirts are being developed now and will feature the official NPMHU Women's Committee logo. These shirts will be made available for purchase by the National Office on the merchandise section of our website at a "no-loss, no-gain" price. Further information will be disseminated once the shirts are ready and the numbers are finalized.