

KARE builds trusted resource for senior community

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Staff Writer

The Kitsap Alliance of Resources for Elders, a team of independent professionals experienced in serving seniors, is now in its third year catering to older adults and their families on the peninsula. Currently partnering with the American Red Cross to offer its Family Caregiver Training Program to the area, members of KARE are continuing their dedication to informing, supporting and empowering seniors in each of their respective ways.

Clarke Whitney CPA's Nancy Conrad said the group's ability to better serve seniors stems from its familiarity with the unique needs of older adults. Knowing that each member of KARE is equally compassionate in helping seniors creates an excellent resource for referral, she said. "It's very nice to be able to refer them to somebody that I know they're going to be well-served by," she said. "Each of us had some type of track record with seniors. It's very satisfying to help somebody through this transition period."

Homease Inc.'s Roland "Hank" Fountain said for someone who finds themselves suddenly a caregiver, the task can be shocking and overwhelming, and having a guiding team can make all the difference. "We want everyone out there to know that we exist. There is an organization that has somebody to fill those needs," he said. "Sometimes they don't even know there is a fix. "Fountain said often it is the smaller tasks, such as cooking or filling the car with gas, that present difficulties for someone who hasn't previously had to perform them. "It's a sudden learning curve," he said. Abiding Homecare executive director Randy Hardin said the mindset of the group has always been altruistic, and not centered on business development. "There's a huge bubble of population that's moving into their senior years," he said. "We don't think about what's coming, and then when it happens it's a crisis." Hardin said the process for caregivers can be intimidating, and KARE works to provide support for them. Prevention of falls and injuries with the use of bathroom safety bars and other amenities can do a lot to increase independence. Often it is only after a fall that additional services like home care is considered, he said.

"People can do things that improve their safety and longevity at home before there's a crisis," he said.

Fountain said home safety is often a subject not addressed by Realtors, but should be considered when buying or building a home.

"It's healthier to live in your familiar environment," he said. "This is about not being handicapped. This is about safety... it's so much more satisfying to improve the quality of someone's life than to build them a beautiful bathroom."

Geriatric social worker Peggy Aronson of Evergreen Counseling said

enhancing independence is of utmost importance in serving seniors, and the skills KARE members offer can do that in many various ways.

J. C. Madison Inc.'s chartered financial consultant, Chris Madison, said he strives to give older adults ideas on how to best plan for income from investments, protect assets and invest appropriately for specific situations. He said each of KARE's members has demonstrated a record of good service to seniors, and many have special training and are Certified Senior Advisors. "People always are really happy and pleased to get an introduction to a quality person," he said.

Richard Tizzano, an KARE member practicing Elder Law and Guardianships, said clients are concerned about the sudden onset of dementia in their loved ones, and many times refers them to Dr. Narinder Duggal of Liberty Bay Internal Medicine to have their medications evaluated, as the sudden onset of dementia is often caused by improper medications.

"Dr. Duggal brings a lot to the group because he is not only a physician who focuses a large part of his practice on seniors, but he is also a licensed pharmacist," Tizzano said.

KARE will be sponsoring a free Health Fair in November, which will include a "Brown Bag Medication Review." Duggal will review medications, doses, interactions and other issues, and will can recommend some helpful adjustments that can help avoid duplications, improve effectiveness and hopefully reduce medication costs.

For more information on KARE, call (360) 394-KARE or visit kare-wa.com.