



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Life Changes Drastically When One Becomes A Family Caregiver
Medford wife becomes caregiver to her husband of 53 years

(Malden, MA)— National Family Caregivers Month each November provides the ideal opportunity to celebrate family caregivers while shining a spotlight on the myriad challenges they face and the various resources available to support them. This year's theme, "Caregiving Around the Clock," is evidence that for many family caregivers, providing care to a loved one is a 24/7 responsibility.

"Family caregivers are the backbone of care that is needed for elders at home, especially those with dementia," says Kathy Learned, caregiver support coordinator for Mystic Valley Elder Services (MVES). "They are integral to keeping their loved ones living safely in the community but do not need to go it alone. We understand the stress, exhaustion and being overwhelmed that family caregivers often feel and we are just a phone call away."

Pam Corolla of Medford became a family caregiver for her husband of 53 years, Paul, when he was diagnosed with frontotemporal lobe dementia in 2017. The proud parents of 2 adult children and grandparents to 5 granddaughters, Pam and Paul have been residents of Medford for more than 50 years and benefit from having their daughter and her family living next door.

Pam says she was directed to MVES by Paul's Mass General Hospital neurologist, Dr. Brad Dickerson. "Dr. Dickerson has been wonderful to our family so when he recommended MVES, we knew we would be in excellent hands," says Pam.

Pam and Kathy point out that life changes drastically when one becomes a family caregiver. Even getting a haircut requires coordination with a relative or private duty aide who can step in to help. Caregivers' own needs often get put on the backburner when they are caring physically and emotionally for a loved one.

“From the moment we met Kathy Learned when she came to our home 2 years ago to evaluate our needs, we felt supported and understood,” says Pam. “She is so knowledgeable and immediately connected us with valuable resources and services, especially an adult day health program right in our own community - Community Family.”

Dr. Dickerson echoed Kathy’s recommendation of the day program, where Paul now goes 3 days a week. Pam also began taking part in regular caregiver support groups facilitated by MVES, which now meet virtually due to the pandemic. According to Pam, the support groups have been invaluable and have helped her form friendships with others facing similar challenges.

According to Learned, MVES takes a comprehensive and individualized approach when it comes to evaluating consumers’ needs. For the Corollas, this meant, in addition to support groups and the day program, help finding private duty assistance and adaptive home equipment such as bed rails and a shower chair. “No two caregiver situations are exactly the same,” says Learned. “We address each situation differently to ensure families’ unique needs are met.”

“My advice to other family caregivers is to reach out to MVES or your local elder services agency sooner rather than later. Truly amazing help is there and it will be better for both you and your partner to access this support,” Pam stresses.

MVES offers a wide range of accessible and affordable caregiver services through its Family Caregiver Support Program, such as one-on-one assistance, family meetings, community resources, and caregiver and peer support groups. To learn more, visit our website at mves.org or call (781) 324-7705.

Photo:



Pam and Paul Corolla of Medford celebrate Pam's birthday with their 5 granddaughters

About Mystic Valley Elder Services

Celebrating 45 Years of helping older adults keep their independence, Mystic Valley Elder Services is a non-profit agency located in Malden, Mass., that provides essential home- and community-based care and resources to older adults, adults living with disabilities, and caregivers who reside in Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Revere, Stoneham, Wakefield and Winthrop, regardless of their income level. Agency services include coordination of home care, transportation, Meals on Wheels, and information and referrals. For more information, please call (781) 324-7705 or visit www.mves.org.