

Help caregivers THRIVE April 4 and every day

Caregivers Alberta

April 4 is National Caregiver Day. But why do we need a day for unpaid family caregivers?

The facts speak for themselves: one in four Albertans is a caregiver for a family member, friend, or community member. They are unpaid, and offer their loved-ones a wide range of help from emotional support to attending medical appointments or assisting with everyday tasks. Across the province every year, family caregivers do 647 million hours of unpaid caregiving – an economic contribution valued at \$12 billion.

In return, what is Alberta giving its caregivers? Does our system provide enough financial support, access to respite and resources, and community support? The research says otherwise.

Recent findings from the University of Alberta's Research on Aging Policies and Practice found caregivers are overwhelmed, financially out-of-pocket, losing paid work-hours and sleep, and burning out—with increased incidences of anxiety and depression.

National Caregiver Day—like so many other days like this one—is about



recognition. Recognizing that caregivers' contribution makes a huge difference. Acknowledging that, without them, our health-care system crumbles.

"Caregivers go largely unrecognized in our province, but they play a major role in providing care across Alberta," says Caregivers Alberta executive director Darrel Gregory. "It's our job at Caregivers Alberta to support and empower unpaid family and friend caregivers so they can maintain their own mental

and physical health while taking care of their loved ones."

Caregivers Alberta client Karen Wilson wrote a First Person column for CBC, describing the guilt she felt helping move her mother with advanced Alzheimer's Disease into long-term care: "She was restrained in a wheelchair and became agitated as she was wheeled past me. 'Traitor!' she screamed. Tears continued to pour down my face as my mom's accusation cut my heart into tiny pieces. I

was overwhelmed by guilt because I had done all of the legwork that brought her here."

Most of our family caregivers are also juggling a full-time job with upwards of 10 to 14 hours a week of caregiving responsibilities on average.

Caregivers need our help to thrive, which is the theme for National Caregiver Day. THRIVE is a call to action for people to remember to thank, help, recognize, include, value and engage family caregivers as a huge

part of the care team for the folks in Alberta who require care.

"We help a lot of seniors through our programs and services, too," says Gregory. "We're giving them what they need so they can find the resources to help their loved ones age in their place-of-choice."

Examples include a new seniors ambassador program, finding volunteers across the province to support caregivers and raise awareness of caregiver issues in their communities.

Love to read?

Author **Billi J. Miller** will be appearing at

Lakeland farmers' markets this spring with

Respect editor Jeff Gaye!

Billi will have copies of her latest book

Farm Kids: Stories From Our Lives

BUY A COPY and GET A

One- or two- year **Respect** subscription at half price!

Watch for us at the following markets:

- St. Paul Friday Market** Friday April 7, 10 am - 4 pm, St. Paul Seniors Citizens Club
- Cold Lake Farmers Market** Thursday April 20, 3:30 - 6:30 pm, Cold Lake Energy Centre
- Bonnyville Farmers Market** Tuesday April 25, 2 pm - 6 pm, Bonnyville Fish and Game
- St. Paul Midweek Farmers Market** Wednesday April 26 2:30 - 6:30 pm, Centennial Seniors Centre
- Bonnyville Farmers' Market** Saturday May 13, 11 am - 2 pm, Bonnyville Centennial Centre



Come and meet Billi and Jeff at your Farmers' Market this spring!

