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CONFERENCE OFFERS SUPPORT TO CAREGIVERS, NOV. 28

Time and time again, numerous studies show caregiving takes a physical, mental and emotional toll on caregivers. Over time, up to 70 percent of full-time caregivers develop symptoms of depression from the stress and workload.

“All too often, caregivers start to neglect their own health unintentionally due to the demands of caregiving for their loved ones,” said Aietah Stephens, executive director for Sooner SUCCESS.

In an effort to support caregivers and to focus on their health and well-being, the OK Caregiver Coalition, DHS Aging Services, Sooner SUCCESS, Morton Comprehensive Health Services and AARP of Oklahoma sought the need to host the “Oklahoma Caregivers Conference” to educate and provide assistance options for Oklahoma caregivers across the lifespan. The event is scheduled for Nov. 28, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the Learning Center Building on the campus of the University of Oklahoma/Tulsa. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. with the conference starting at 9 a.m.

“The physical and emotional burden of becoming a caregiver is often overlooked, but caring for a loved one is a significant responsibility in someone’s life,” said Claire Dowers-Nichols, OK Caregiver Coalition Chair. “Resources such as this conference can be extremely helpful to families who are struggling to balance caring for their loved one and continuing to live their daily lives.

“What makes this conference unique is that state agencies and organizations have come together to share caregiving information across the lifespan – from caregiving for infants to caregiving for older adults.”

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A panel of caregivers, with representation of caregivers across the lifespan who care for children to older adults, will provide information on a variety of helpful topics. Through breakout sessions in the afternoon, attendees can also learn about the following areas:

- Respite Programs
- Improving Health and Wellness
- Ways to Recharge and Energize
- Connecting with other Caregivers
- Supports across the lifespan from children to older adults

Vendors will also be on hand throughout the day for attendees who want to find out more about services in the area.

“We are thankful for our conference partners, DHS Aging Services, Sooner SUCCESS, AARP of Oklahoma and Morton Comprehensive Health Services, who have helped make this conference possible. Sponsorships such as this are invaluable in providing information and resources to caregivers,” said Stephens.

To register for the conference, please visit: okcaregivers.eventbrite.com. Registration deadline is Nov. 26 at 5 p.m. Although the event is free to attend, registration is required as boxed lunches will be served.

“Caregivers typically wear many hats. From providing direct care, to household duties, to handling finances, caregivers are often expected to juggle a variety of tasks and information to be able to fully care for their loved ones. Their roles and responsibilities also change over time as their loved one’s needs change. With such a depth and range of knowledge to cover, caregivers may at times feel overwhelmed,” said Stephens. “That’s why this conference is so important to address the unique needs of our Oklahoma caregivers across the lifespan.”

Martha Rains, caregiver coordinator at Morton, said caregiving does not discriminate against age and that is why there is a need for this conference.

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“Caregivers often feel alone as they deal with the day to day issues of caregiving. Finding resources that will help can often feel like running a maze and hitting dead ends. This Caregiver Lifespan conference was developed to help caregivers find the resources they need in the community to make their caregiving journey a little easier. During the conference, they will find information, local resources and have the opportunity to meet with other caregivers who share their feelings and share their journey. At the end of the day, they will be more connected to others in the community. They will leave the conference knowing that they are not alone,” said Rains.

For more information, call (918) 295-6154.

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