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Caregiver Thought Leader Interview: Dawn Wellborn-Robbins • July 13, 2015

EDITOR'S PEN

Gary Barg, Editor-in-Chief

Caregiver Thought Leader Interview: Dawn Wellborn-Robbins

Gary Barg: We actually like to call the caregiver the CEO of Caring for My Loved One, Inc. Yet, traditionally, we as caregivers never have the tools that any other CEO would have to help keep us organized and reduce the stress that comes from trying to manage so many responsibilities at the same time. Tell me how you're helping caregivers with these issues and, frankly, how it all came about.

Dawn

Wellborn-

Robbins: Well, we actually have created a really handy system that addresses the top two organizational needs of caregivers: How do I keep all of the information together where it can be retrieved easily? And, how do I effectively pass along that information to others who are helping with the caregiving? A lot of times, people focus on the person for whom care is being provided and they don't really pay a lot of attention to the needs of the caregiver. So, we really wanted to focus on how we can help caregivers stay organized. We also wanted to provide a bit of hope and encouragement on a daily basis to help them stay positive mentally, physically and spiritually.

Gary Barg: You know the [Caregiver Inspirational Organizer](#) created a whole lot of buzz among the attendees when it was seen at a recent Fearless Caregiver Conference. What are caregivers telling you?

Dawn Wellborn-Robbins: From my personal experience, as someone with a mother and grandmother living with Alzheimer's, I know what it feels like to be overwhelmed as a caregiver. We all need help, but we don't always know where to go to get that help. That's what I've been hearing from other caregivers, as well. We need support and encouragement every day as we're trying to keep track of doctors' appointments, financial and legal information, and what questions to ask of the doctor or what follow up things are needed. How do we keep all of those notes from doctors' appointments together and keep track of all of our loved one's medication needs or what medications were causing certain side effects? Particularly, if a caregiver has others in the family that are co-caregiving. How do you make sure you pass on all that critical information so they'll know what to tell the doctors?

Gary Barg: Well, talk about trusted authorities, DaySpring is actually part of Hallmark. You know, one of the things that actually caught people's attention at the conference was a little booklet called "Prayers and Promises for Caregivers." Can you tell me why that's included? Why are inspiration and spirituality part of the mix?

Dawn Wellborn-Robbins: We feel that taking care of the whole person, not just the physical, but also the mental and spiritual aspects, is very important in the healing process. Or just to keep people hopeful and encouraged in their lives—not only for our loved ones, but for the caregiver, as well.

The booklet was actually written by one of the founders of DaySpring, Roy Lessin, who is an established author. He has written many books and devotions and this is a topic near and dear to him on a personal level. He has a blog called Meet Me in the Meadow with quite the following of caregivers who have really poured out their hearts to him. He wrote "Prayers and Promises for Caregivers" to give them encouragement and to help them know that they're appreciated and not alone.

Gary Barg: What elements will people find when they get one of these organizers?

Dawn Wellborn-Robbins: Well, they're going to get a really nice hardcover spiral bound notebook—something that's going to last for a long time. Inside are tab dividers for each section. The main section is for the health information to track critical patient information. Also, a life management section to track household information. There are sections for insurance, financial and legal information. All these things that you probably have scattered all over your house in different folders or different drawers. The organizer is designed to keep all of this together. There is also a dated calendar for the year. When the calendar year ends, we have supplements for the next year.

The calendar is really great because it's designed with the caregiver in mind. On Sundays, it's going remind you to set up your loved one's pillbox for the week. It gives you places to include your weekly meal plan, and to remind you about medications needed to be taken on schedule. There are scriptures and positive quotes throughout the calendar. There is also a section for storing business cards along with other storage pockets. There's a place to keep extra keys if you're caring for someone in their household and the wonderful bonus booklet from Roy Lessin.

There is also a CD that has all of this in digital format. It's great for backup and for sharing with other caregivers in the family.

Gary Barg: There's no time like the present for the caregiver to get organized.

Dawn Wellborn-Robbins: Exactly. It's critical for a caregiver to be organized.

Gary Barg: What is the one most important piece of advice you'd like to share with family caregivers?

Dawn Wellborn-Robbins: You're stronger than you know and you are not alone. You may think you are, but whatever your situation is, there are so many great organizational and resource tools available to help you. I would encourage them to go online and look at all the different books and resources that are available. Take a look at the [Caregiver Inspirational Organizer](#) and see if it's something that would help you. Once you get it together in the book, you're going to have it forever. And it's going to be such a great tool.

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