

## Regent Park is now offering respite care

Written by Chris Lee

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Family members and loved ones taking care of an elderly person sometimes need to take a step back and take a break.

Regent Park and Carriage House in Holyoke is stepping in to lend a helping hand.

Now available through Regent Park is a respite care option. Those who are burnt out or wishing to go away on a vacation but need somewhere to leave loved ones, may do so at Regent Park.

The program is offered year-round but especially during the holiday season, people are wanting to get out of town and Regent Park is there to help.

Julie Kotch, Regent Park and Carriage House administrator, said rooms may be rented for any amount of time. "It can be three weeks or it can be three days," Kotch said. Even a month if needed, she added.

"Caring for a loved one 24/7 can be very taxing on anybody," Kotch said. "It's just a good way to give everybody some relief." Kotch said the respite option they are offering isn't in-home care but instead is offered at the Regent Park facility in Holyoke.

Regent Park will supply everything for those utilizing the respite care system. The rooms will be furnished, meals provided and medications administered to those needing assistance. In addition, daily and weekly activities will be provided within the facility.

"We provide everything," Kotch said. The only thing that patients need to bring of their own is their clothes.

Kotch said participants will receive around-the-clock nursing care.

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Most of the time, respite care is specialized for the nursing home side of the facility, but Kotch said she will open it up to the assisted living side as well.

Kotch also added respite care is a “great way to see if nursing home placement is for you.” She said it’s a great transition for those thinking about nursing home placement for their loved ones.

Respite care is short-term care given to a hospice patient by another caregiver, so that a family member or friend who is the patient’s caregiver can rest or take time off. This type of care was created to allow caregivers time away from administering care, with the goal to help the caregivers have lower stress and at the same time fill the needs of the individual receiving care.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, respite care comes from the Medicare-approved facilities, like a hospital, nursing home or hospice inpatient facility.

Respite care can take many forms, but boils down to two basic ideas: sharing the responsibility for caregiving and getting support. Finding the right balance requires persistence, patience and preparation.

Remembering the benefits and following these six tips can ease the process:

—Plan and schedule frequent breaks. Respite is not just a service—it is an effect that can only come from regular relief.

—Use checklists to inform respite care providers about a care recipient’s schedules, likes and dislikes. Offer suggestions for handling any difficult behaviors.

—Make back-up plans. Always keep a list of alternate respite care providers and resources. Unplanned emergencies should not prevent people from taking care of themselves.

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—Evaluate respite care providers often. Observe a care recipient before and after respite sessions. Ask for brief updates and more detailed reports regularly.

—Expect changes. Respite care is a process that often requires fine-tuning. Anticipating and accepting changes in personnel or programs can keep people from becoming discouraged.

—Attend a support group regularly. Structured and informal groups allow people to meet others in similar situations. People can talk, vent, laugh and exchange tips with others who understand. Those who can't easily leave home, online communities, message boards and forums can also help provide much-needed support.

In addition to private pay, Kotch said Medicaid will also help pay for a portion of respite care.

Kotch said they are hoping to offer weekly support groups to those with loved ones in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. She said they hope to have the groups available after the holiday season.

“It is a change and it's a hard change for people,” Kotch said. “It's harder on the families sometimes than it is the loved one.”

For more information on respite care in Holyoke at Regent Park/Carriage House, contact Kotch at 854-2251.

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