

CAREGIVERS NEED A BREAK TOO!

Did you know that 40% of all caregivers caring for chronically ill loved ones 24 hours a day, seven days a week die before their loved ones? It's true, which then triggers a huge risk for the loved ones to be institutionalized which they fear more than death.

Armed with this statistic the Northern Nevada RSVP Program began researching possible funding for a program that would give caregivers some needed time off to pursue their own needs. After contacting numerous funding sources, RSVP received a reply from Senator Harry Reid who proposed a grant for \$95,000 which RSVP accepted, and began a Respite Care program with 20 trained volunteer caregivers who assist 22 full time caregivers needing a break. RSVP does not charge for this service; however, donations are welcome. RSVP is actively seeking additional funding so as to offer assistance to all caregivers needing a break, but who are financially unable to afford it.

Imagine being responsible for a very ill loved one 24/7 with little time for sleep, meals or any other activities. The result is a stressed out, exhausted and often depressed caregiver whose own health has begun to deteriorate so badly both mentally and physically that both parties are at risk.

The RSVP Respite Care Program's goal is to have trained, capable volunteers who can persuade the caregiver that it's OK to leave for a few hours and not worry about their loved one. This is also a great experience for the loved one as it introduces a new person willing to hear old stories and get a laugh since the caregiver who has heard them a hundred times doesn't laugh at them anymore.

RSVP is actively seeking volunteers with a few hours a week to work in this most essential of programs which rewards caregivers for their dedication to their loved ones by keeping them at home where they are happiest and healthiest.

However, if you just want to look at the hard fiscal facts, it costs around \$85,000 a year to institutionalize one senior as opposed to around \$2,000 a year for volunteer respite care for two to three caregivers!

RSVP respite care volunteers tell us that it gives them great satisfaction to see the difference in a caregiver that has had the opportunity for some private time to get their hair or nails done, go to a movie, etc. They say the caregiver returns refreshed and grateful.

Respite care volunteers can earn a \$175.00 per month stipend and mileage to and from care assignments at 30 cents a mile. For more details call RSVP at 687-4680, Ext.7 and speak with Susan Haas. Thank you and God Bless!