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PRESS RELEASE

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IL Department on Aging recognizes National Caregivers Month *IDoA highlights \$1 million in new funding to provide relief to family caregivers*

Springfield - As we begin National Family Caregivers Month, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) would like to highlight its supportive dementia gap filling initiative, Caregiver Support Program, and the resources available for people who are caring for older Illinoisans.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, 83% of care provided in the community is conducted by unpaid caregivers, primarily family members. In Illinois, there are over 590,000 family caregivers providing an estimated 671 million hours of unpaid care during any given year. Additionally, it is projected that the number of individuals age 65 and older with Alzheimer's disease will increase to 18% by 2025.

Because of this, \$1 million in new funding was included in IDoA's 2020 budget to enhance the Caregiver Support Program adding additional educational programs for family caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD). The 13 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) have developed specific policies for implementing service in their area.

"Caregivers also need support, or they risk putting their own health and well-being at risk," said Paula Basta, Director of IDoA. "I would like to remind everyone to keep an eye out for friends and family who are caregivers and take a moment to support those who support others."

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 1 in 5 Illinois adults are caregivers. Of these caregivers, about 16% are 65 years of age or older themselves, and almost a third provide care for at least 20 hours per week. Support those who support others with these tips:

- **Checking in** - Isolation or feeling alone is a significant challenge when providing care for someone. A phone call to a caregiver just to check in, sending a note, or stopping by for a visit can make a significant difference and help them feel supported. Almost 1 in 10 caregivers said they had no one to talk to about private matters and 1 in 5 said they had no one to call for help.

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The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior Helpline at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)

- **Everyone needs a break** - Volunteer to spend time with the person and allow the caregiver a chance to run errands, go to their own doctor's appointment, participate in a support group or engage in an activity that helps them recharge. More than 60% of family caregivers must juggle their home lives with working a paid job and meeting the needs of the relatives or friends in their care.
- **Holiday help** - Support caregivers around the holidays by offering to help with cooking, cleaning or gift shopping. If a caregiver has traditionally hosted family celebrations, offer your home instead.

The use of respite assistance is not a new concept; in Illinois and across the nation, the use of respite assistance has been a successful tool to engage the community and allow families time to take care of themselves so that they can continue to care for their loved ones.

The Caregiver Support Program, managed by IDoA in partnership with the Area Agencies on Aging and local community-service providers, provide information to family caregivers about available services, individual counseling, support groups or caregiver training; assistance in gaining access to services; as well as supplemental services on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by family caregivers. All the resources are meant to provide respite care to a family caregiver. For more information on the Caregiver Support Program, visit www.illinois.gov/aging, and click on the Caregiver Support Program tab.

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