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Empowering Family Caregivers

Across Kansas and within our homes, family caregivers provide essential care and support to parents, spouses, friends, and neighbors. Nearly 30 percent of adults over the age of 18 provide unpaid care for individuals with chronic medical conditions or disabilities. More than one-third of these caregivers are also raising children at home while balancing full-time employment—a group often referred to as the *sandwich generation*. Not surprisingly, caregivers frequently report high levels of stress and are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and their own health challenges.

The impact of family caregivers on our local communities is immense. Unpaid caregivers contribute billions of dollars' worth of care and services each year—support that would otherwise need to be provided by the healthcare system. Family caregivers assist with activities of daily living such as dressing, bathing, feeding, toileting, and mobility. They also provide transportation, shopping, housekeeping, meal preparation, medication management, and coordination of healthcare appointments. With so many responsibilities, it is no wonder caregivers often feel exhausted, overworked, and overwhelmed.

Although many caregivers report a sense of satisfaction and purpose in their role, the emotional demands can be significant. Common feelings include guilt, grief, frustration, resentment, and fatigue, all of which can become overwhelming overtime. Finding opportunities for self-care is often challenging, yet it is essential. Access to education and reliable information can empower caregivers, helping them feel more confident and better equipped to manage stress. The more caregivers learn about their role, the more empowered and supported they can become.

To support family caregivers in our community, the Alzheimer's Association Heart of America Chapter, the Jackson County Senior Center, and K-State Research and Extension—Meadowlark District will host a series of educational programs designed specifically for caregivers. These sessions will focus on practical tools, strategies, and resources to help caregivers navigate their roles more effectively. Participants are welcome to attend all four sessions or select the ones that best meet their needs. All sessions are free and will be held at the Jackson County Senior Center in Holton.

- **Wednesday, April 29-10:00 a.m. -**
Session One: Building Foundations of Caregiving: Explore relationship changes, the person-centered care approach, and how to build a caregiving team support system.
- **Wednesday May 6—10:00 a.m.**
Session Two: Communicating Effectively: Explore how dementia and chronic conditions affect communication, strategies to help you communicate well, improve communication with family, friends, and health-care professionals.
- **Wednesday May 13—10:00 a.m.**
Session Three: Dementia Related Behaviors: Learn how dementia can cause changes in behaviors, understand possible triggers, discover medical and non-medical ways to address behavior, and learn about the four-step approach to managing behavior.
- **Wednesday May 20—10:00 a.m.**
Session Four: Supporting Independence and Exploring Care and Support Services: learn how to help make activities meaningful, know the right amount of support, learn how dementia affects safety, and learn about support services in your community.

To sign up for session or for more information about these and other Extension programs please contact Teresa Hatfield at www.thatfield@ksu.edu or call 785-364-4125.