NORTHERN comfort

Comfort Keepers®

CONTINUITY OF CARE

QUALITY IN-HOME CARE

Saying Goodnight

By Dave Murphy

My wife – SK – usually helps mom with the final steps before bed. I have mom for most of every day, so the evening help from SK is invaluable.

Before bed, mom needs several sets of medications including a nebulizer breathing treatment. Then comes dental care which is more complicated for mom due to dry mouth caused by all her meds. With mom's memory issues, she needs close monitoring or she'd skip the dental care completely, much less stay at it for the time the dentist recommends. But each evening, she laughs when we mention we'll help, as if we're suggesting she needs us for the first time. We've been helping for well over a year.

After the nightly dental adventure, I give mom time to get into bed. Then I go up to say goodnight in what's become ritual. Mom is always curled onto one side with just enough room for me to sit on the edge of her bed. We've never been a touchy-feely family. Saying, "I love you" or hugs and kisses were infrequently extended. But since mom had pneumonia last fall and we were told she might not wake up, I've wanted each day to end with some form of touch and an "I love you."

> Only through this experience have I learned that sometimes you have to stop being a caregiver so you can once again be family.

So I take my place at the edge of mom's bed. I speak so she knows I'm there as I touch her shoulder. A day never passes that she doesn't tell me how badly she feels or questions why she's still here. But with each night she tells me it was a good day. I hug her, tell her I love her and usually she returns the effort.

And then I'm back in time, nearly half a century earlier. I'm back to when I was nine and dad collapsed in front of me before dying hours later.

CONT'D ON PG. 2

Adele Murphy

From Our Home To Yours…

Russ & Leslie Knopp

Hello Friends, happy anniversary! Comfort Keepers of Northern Lower Michigan is ten years old this month. We are planning to celebrate by honoring special seniors who are nominated by you to be the recipient of a Golden Wish©. You'll find more information on that inside. As we were planning this issue of Northern Comfort, we wanted to share a story that illustrates why we are so passionate about this field of serving seniors and their family caregivers.

That's why we are so pleased to introduce Dave Murphy, a writer and caregiver to his 91-year old and dementia-impaired mother. Dave recently launched a website where he shares stories about relationships, caregiving, and how these experiences bring past and present together. I know you will enjoy meeting 'Ma Murph' when you read Dave's story. She is just the kind of person we hope to see honored with a Golden Wish. Please check out Dave's web site www.sonofamom.com for more great reading.

It has been our privilege over the last ten years to assist hundreds of families across the region with transitions of all kinds. No two people or families we have cared for are exactly alike, and we have learned from each and every experience. But as unique as each of us is, we share a common journey as we age, and it's good to have support along the way. Here's to many more years of service, learning and making a difference.

Saying Goodnight

CONT'D FROM COVER

My nightmares began right after his death. Mom would come to my room and sit on the edge of my bed to comfort me. That became ritual for a year or two. Some nights she'd lie down beside me and fall asleep out of exhaustion from her single-parenting duties. But I'd always hear her when she'd get up to go to her room.

I'm not going to paint the picture that mom did absolutely everything right. She was human and made mistakes. But her effort and intentions were extraordinary. I found out much later in life that mom's income was below the poverty line for our family size. But I never felt a sense of want.

I was mom's youngest and we were always close. After mom's long work career and a remarkable life of giving to others, SK and I moved mom near us when she was in her early 70s. Then unexpectedly, grandma moved in with mom. For the last six years of grandma's life and up until mom was 77-years old, mom was grandma's caregiver.

Today, mom is 91-years old and has advanced dementia. With a home office, I'm able to be her primary caregiver. It's rewarding but challenging. Sometimes I feel overwhelmed.

I write about our experiences, certainly to share with others, but also to find meaning for myself. The stories are sometimes humorous, other times poignant. The flashbacks are frequent and almost electric. Anything from a glance, to a fragrance, to a phrase can open up a portal to the past, just like my goodnight ritual seems to be an echo from when dad died and mom helped keep the nightmares away. Usually I begin a story as a process of discovery as opposed to having a clue about how I'll wrap it up.

I look forward to SK taking over those final nighttime duties – a luxury mom didn't have with me when I was a child – so I don't have to spend morning to night coaxing mom to stay on task. Only through this experience have I learned that sometimes you have to stop being a caregiver so you can once again be family.

Caregiving can be exhausting. I'm sure that single parenting was for mom, too.

I hope my goodnights do something to set the world right each evening. Like the stories I write, I'm discovering something about this passage every day.

10 Years of keeping seniors happy at home

It's our anniversary!

We're proud of what we have accomplished in the past 10 years and are excited to accomplish even more in the next 10. Since we opened in 2005, we have helped 2,598 families, served 21 counties, provided 1,278,000 hours of service to seniors, and awarded 28 college scholarships to caregivers.

Thank you for your support and entrusting us to care for your loved ones. In celebration, we'll be honoring local seniors through our new Golden Wishes program. See insert sheet for more info.

GOLDEN WISHES
Making seniors' dreams come true

Golden Wishes, a program commemorating the 10-year anniversary of Comfort Keepers of Northern Lower Michigan, will grant well-deserving seniors the wish of a lifetime. The program honors local, deserving seniors who have given so much of themselves to their friends, family and community.

Do you know of a worthy senior? Nominate them and help fulfill his or her Golden Wish! Complete our online form at Goldenwishesupnorth.com and hit submit, or fill out the form we've inserted in this newsletter.

Welcome, Nancy!

NANCY OURADA

We are excited to welcome Nancy Ourada as our Client Care Coordinator, Northern Territory (Emmet, Charlevoix, Antrim, Otsego and Cheboygan counties). Originally from Charlevoix, she has returned to the area after living in Texas, Alabama, Hawaii and Virginia while her husband was in the Air Force.

In her new role, she will develop personalized solutions that encourage independent living for area seniors, manage staffing, work with families at both American House of Charlevoix and American House of Petoskey, and participate in community events – bringing awareness to the needs of older adults.

Nancy started her nursing education at North Central Michigan College, earning an Associate Degree in Nursing. She continued her schooling and earned a Master's in Nursing Education from the University of Phoenix.

Nancy lives in Charlevoix with her family and enjoys camping, attending hockey games at her alma mater, Lake Superior State University, and coaching/managing youth sports.

ALZHEIMER'S FACTS

- Every **67** seconds someone in the United States develops the disease.
- An estimated **5.3 million** Americans of all ages have Alzheimer's disease in 2015.
- In 2015, an estimated **700,000** people in the United States age 65 and older will die with Alzheimer's.
- Alzheimer's is the only disease among the **top 10** causes of death in America that cannot be prevented, cured or even slowed.
- **96%** increase in Alzheimer's deaths since 2000

Our Behind-the-Scenes Team

(l-r) XXX XXXX, Nikki Cole, XXX XXXX, Teresa Smith, XXX XXXX

This team knows how to get the job done! They handle all of our behind-the-scene needs from scheduling visits and hiring new caregivers, to answering calls and updating information on our website. Thank you for keeping things running so smoothly.

Strong Brain, Strong Body

Tips to keep your brain active every day

- Stay curious and involved – commit to lifelong learning
- Read, write, work crossword or other puzzles
- Enroll in courses at your local adult education center, community college or other community group
- Attend lectures and plays
- Play games
- Garden
- Try memory exercises

Tips for safe exercise

- Obtain medical clearance to exercise
- Stop exercising if you feel pain
- Don't exercise when you are injured, sick or running a temperature
- Don't hold your breath during exercise
- Always warm up
- Always cool down
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise
- Avoid heavy meals for about 2 hours before energetic exercise
- Use sun screen, hats, visors, sunglasses during outdoor daytime exercise
- Use good posture during exercise

Source: www.seniorfitness.net

Congrats, Melanie!

MELANIE MARTEL

We would like to congratulate Melanie Martell on earning her dementia consultant certification through the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners. In order to become a certified dementia consultant, she completed an extensive Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Care course and met all requirements set forth by the Council.

Melanie is an active member of the Twilight Rotary Club and Bay Area Senior Advocates. She is also a past chairperson for the Memory Walk to End Alzheimer's in Traverse City. She enjoys spending quality family time with her two daughters, Kayla and Sarah along with her extended family. She has fun doing any activities in nature; running, hiking and kayaking.

Welcome Back, Toni!

TONI CONE

Toni Cone has returned to Comfort Keepers as our Northern Territory Community Liaison (Charlevoix, Emmet, Otsego, Cheboygan, Antrim and Crawford), after spending the last several years working for Emmet County. You may remember Toni, as she was previously our Northern Territory Manager. She has worked in senior services for fifteen years.

Toni has a Bachelor's Degree in Business from Ferris State University and a Master's Degree in Communication from Eastern Michigan University. She lives in Petoskey with her husband, Chip and their 7 year-old twins, Luke and Sophie. She looks forward to working with members of the community to build awareness about Comfort Keepers' services and the needs of area seniors.

Diana, Great Work!

DIANA COLBATH

We are very proud of Diana Colbath, our Delegated Service Aide/ Supervisor Quality Care Coach/ CPR Instructor. Diana recently obtained her Certified Nurse Assistant certificate. With this designation, she will be able to expand her coaching roll and help other caregivers improve their skills.

Diana enjoys making a difference in people's lives and helping our seniors stay home safely, giving their families peace of mind. She also enjoys knowing that she is helping other caregivers to be the best that they can be. She is excellent at teaching new ways to do things and enjoys watching caregivers grow.

1107 E. Eighth Street
Traverse City, MI 49686

Look inside for

Saying Goodnight

Alzheimer's Facts

Strong Brain Strong Body

6 Tips for a Better Burger

Burgers get a bum rap for being unhealthy, and healthier burgers have the reputation of being bland and dry. Here are 6 tips to make a healthy burger taste great.

1 Add flavor and moisture to lean burgers by incorporating other ingredients into the meat mixture, such as sauteed onions and bell peppers.

2 Don't overwork the meat. If you're adding seasoning or other ingredients to the meat itself, mix it just until everything is incorporated.

3 Don't just sprinkle your formed burgers with salt and pepper—mix seasonings into the meat as well.

4 Adding a leaner, neutral-tasting meat like turkey to a fattier cut like lamb reduces saturated fat and cholesterol.

5 Chicken and turkey burgers are often leaner, but not very visually appealing. Adding colorful herbs and spices like paprika, cilantro and parsley increases their visual appeal and adds flavor.

6 Get creative and use the flavor combinations in your favorite ethnic foods to season burgers. For example, if you're a huge fan of Mexican food, try adding chile powder and cumin to your burger and top it with pepper Jack cheese and salsa.

Source: WebMD.com

To receive an email version of this newsletter, please email us at: traversecitymi@comfortkeepers.com.
If you'd like to be removed from our newsletter mailing list, please call 866.929.9044.