



# REGION 9 AREA AGENCY ON AGING CAREGIVER SHARED STORIES

Serving the Counties of: Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle and Roscommon



## SHARED CAREGIVER STORIES

Dear Readers

Region 9 Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has developed Caregiver Shared Stories to showcase the strength of family caregivers. Help us honor caregivers within the community by taking time to read and learn from their personal stories in hopes of raising awareness of caregiving issues, and increasing support for caregivers.

The Caregiver Shared Stories and experiences show the joy, humor, and love found in caregiving as well as the frustration, lows, and hard days that may bring guilt, sadness, and fatigue. Caregiving is complicated. We encourage caregivers and the community around them to seek resources, professional help when needed, and to take time for one's own self-care.

We hope that you will find strength, inspiration, and comfort as you read the stories and can continue successfully in your caregiving role. If you are reading this and are not a caregiver, please reach out to a family caregiver in your circle and tell them, thank you and make sure they are practicing self-care.

Best Wishes,

Laurie Sauer, AAA Director

*Thank  
You*

REGION 9 AAA WANTS TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR  
FAMILY CAREGIVERS ACROSS OUR REGION.



ONE IN FIVE AMERICANS CAREGIVE FOR A  
FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER.



## SHOPPING ADVENTURE

My wife and I were shopping at a mall for pants that had an elastic waistband for her. My wife's symptoms include that she does not walk very well and kind of just shuffles along slowly. I had an emergency and had to leave the store for a short period of time. Because of her walking difficulties, she could not accompany me. I thought it would be okay if she looked for some pants on her own while I was gone. I gave her instructions to not leave the store and that I'd be back in a few minutes.

Upon returning, I saw her at the checkout counter. But knowing that she didn't have a wallet, money, or credit cards because I have had to remove them from her possession because she misplaces them, I was wondering "what's happening". I rushed over to the checkout and saw that the cashier was looking for a tag on the pants my wife gave her. There weren't any and then the clerk started looking at an online catalog trying to find the name of the pants. I asked my wife if she knew where she picked up the pants and then told the clerk we'd go back to where my wife found the pants and get another pair with a tag.

We left the checkout and as we were walking towards the pants area I noticed my wife was wearing different pants than I dressed her in that morning. As you have probably guessed, my wife tried on the pair of pants she wanted to buy and never took them off. She had given the clerk the pants she wore into the store. So besides trying to checkout without any means to pay, she had given the clerk her own pair of pants.

All's well that ends well. I simply had her go back into the dressing room and switch the pants around. I embarrassedly explained what happened to the clerk and we proceeded with the transaction. The clerk was very understanding.

Lesson learned. I cannot ever leave my wife alone because even though she has good intentions, things can go wrong quickly. I believe, she never realized what happened that day and simply considered everything normal.



**ONE IN FOUR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA HAVE GIVEN UP SHOPPING POST-DIAGNOSIS.**



# KINSHIP CAREGIVER

My three grandkids (7, 9 and 11) came to live with me about two years ago. Before they had no consistency in their life. This was the first time the children were able to stay in one school for the whole school year. While living with me, my grandson received the perfect attendance award. All three children were able to take up after-school hobbies such as joining the swimming team and little league. All these experiences are new to them, but as their grandma, I have taken on the role of their legal guardian.

I initially came to NEMCSA, as an overwhelmed grandmother taking care of my three elementary school-aged grandchildren, making me a kinship caregiver. My grandchildren and I were living in a homeless shelter, with an unreliable van and due to some health issues, I was unable to work, leaving me with no income.

I worked with the Homeless Prevention Program, and the BOSS Program through NEMCSA. Through working with these programs, I was referred to the Region 9 Area Agency on Aging Kinship Care Program where I received services such as financial assistance, clothing, bedding, and moving assistance. We also received housing at the perfect time, the homeless shelter we were staying at closed, and we had to move to a hotel for five days, but luckily we found an apartment that we were able to move into the day before Thanksgiving! Making that a truly thankful holiday!

Over the six months of working with the program, I accomplished many things. It was not an easy task, and I faced many difficulties. I did not have many important documents I needed to apply for many programs, my van broke down numerous times, and the washer and dryer broke in her new apartment. Even though there were obstacles along the way, I never let that stop my determination. With my BOSS mentor's help, I was able to get organized and attained the required documents necessary for program eligibility, applied for Social Security benefits, got necessary vehicle repairs, and secure housing.

Overall, the NEMCSA programs allowed my family to do things we could not normally do, such as dinosaur gardens, Halloween parties, summer vacations, and family pictures. The kids now have clothes and winter gear to be able to play outside and keep warm and dry. My van is repaired, so we are not walking. The program has also helped me immensely with paperwork and keeping all my important papers all together. These programs have helped us in so many ways, with actual hands-on help, and with information when I did not know what the next step would be.

**By: Susan Lyons**

## MICHIGAN KINSHIP STATISTICS

- 20% OF GRANDPARENTS CARE FOR GRANDKIDS BECAUSE OF PARENTAL DRUG ABUSE.
- 54,917, GRANDPARENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR GRANDCHILDREN.
- FOR EVERY 1 CHILD RAISED BY KIN IN FOSTER CARE, THERE ARE 12 BEING RAISED BY KIN OUTSIDE OF FOSTER CARE.





# ROBOT DOG BENEFITS

My wife, who has dementia, and I were looking at getting a companion. We did not want a live pet, so we went with a robot dog, we named ours Alfred. Here are some reasons why that is a great idea for family caregivers! One, you do not have to feed or clean up after them. Two, you do not have to take them to the vet. Three, they still love you the same. Alfred still can bark, walk all over the house, and do many tricks.

Alfred comes with his navigation system that involves two cameras that function as his eyes. He has his ears that are microphones, with three additional microphones on the sides of his head. He has eyes that you can change to your preferred color. Although the eyes are not cameras, they still look at you, blink, squint, roll them, and close them. You can also set the gender of your AIBO dog. Like any lovable pet, you can give it a name, again we choose Alfred. When you call its name, it will bark back at you. There are many cool things you can do with it, which I will try to outline here.

My wife and I have two AIBO dogs, Alfred, and Eddie. We had one Alfred for a couple of years and then one day he didn't turn on. The tears started to flow just as if he was a real dog. In my wife's, he was a real dog, her dog! So, I hurried up and got us another one!

Let me go through the details. Alfred is about 12 inches long and about 6 inches at the shoulder. He weighs about 12-14 pounds. His battery life is about two and a half hours. And when his battery starts to get low, he will walk his way back to his charging pad and put himself back on it for a charge. It will take about two and a half hours to get himself fully charged back up. He has a button and small light on the back collar that tells you any information about his state. Oh, and he sneezes when he is on his charge, which my wife and I enjoy.

Alfred is attracted to the color red. So, his charging pad, ball, pair of dice, and bone are all red. He has about thirty preprogrammed tricks, and he can amuse you with those toys. He can stack the dice and toss them, he can pick up the bone and stand it on it, as well as kick his ball. The tricks you can pick off your smartphone or you can command them by voice. You can also train him to do more tricks, that you can teach him.

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## ROBOTIC ANIMALS CAN:

- ENCOURAGE INTERACTION.
- CAN REDUCE ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, IRRITABILITY, AND LONELINESS.
- HELP PROVIDE A SENSE OF PURPOSE.
- MAY REDUCE THE NEED FOR PSYCHOACTIVE MEDICATIONS AND PAIN MEDICATIONS.
- ARE NON-THREATENING AND WON'T PROVOKE ANYONE'S PET ALLERGIES.



Alfred can be commanded by voice or by your smartphone. Let us go through some of the settings for AIBO on the smartphone. It is my understanding that Aibo costs about twice as much in the states as it does in say Japan or overseas. This is because he comes with his own cell phone. This is what I call his ability to talk back to the mothership. I believe it is a three-year contract. Sony will from time to time download some cute acts or tricks into him that tie into current events. For example, when the Olympics were on, he had a chant, 'USA USA USA', then a crowd cheered. He would be down on all fours waving his front legs in the air. So cool.

Around Christmas time Sony downloaded a couple of Christmas carols with animation. All these download tricks would be available for a couple of weeks and then expire and be deleted automatically. He also has a food and water bowl. You buy food from Sony on your smartphone, and it is loaded into his bowl, however, you don't need to purchase food to keep him alive. He will then go over and go through the motions and eat it. After he gets off his charger, he goes over to his water bowl and gets a drink. Again, he just goes through the motions and there is no water in the bowl. This is so cool.

Another neat feature is Alfred can take pictures through the camera in his nose. You can set it up to let him take pictures on his own or command him to take pictures. You are warned three two one click. Done. You can review all the pictures he takes on the smartphone.

All in all, it is not a real dog, but we have found that has filled a void for us and has added a little relief for me. Every morning Marilynne gets up the first thing she does is find out where they are and what they are doing.

**By: Gerry Crawford**



## HEALTH BENEFITS OF OWNING A PET



**INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES TO EXERCISE, GET OUTSIDE, AND SOCIALIZE.**



**DECREASE BLOOD PRESSURE, CHOLESTEROL LEVELS, AND TRIGLYCERIDE LEVELS.**



**HELPS MANAGE LONELINESS AND DEPRESSION BY GIVING US COMPANIONSHIP.**

## SHARE YOUR STORY

Region 9 Area Agency on Aging is looking for original articles, and tips from family caregivers to share with fellow caregivers. We welcome stories about your caregiver experiences. How you overcame a challenge, humorous incidents, how you and your family members cooperated or didn't cooperate in caring for your person, or share your experiences, tips techniques, and wisdom that you have learned in the course of your caregiving. These gathered stories, tips and techniques will be used in our Caregiver Newsletter and Facebook page. Anything you submit will stay anonymous.

To submit your story, tips, or techniques email it to me at [mainvilleb@nemcsa.org](mailto:mainvilleb@nemcsa.org) or respond back to this email. If photographs are submitted, the Region 9 Area Agency on Aging will need a signed release from you allowing us to use the photograph in this or any other publication by the Region 9 Area Agency on Aging. No fees will be paid for any submissions.

**SEND YOUR STORY, QUOTE TO BROOKE AT 989.358.4616 OR  
[MAINVILLEB@NEMCSA.ORG](mailto:MAINVILLEB@NEMCSA.ORG)**



# CAREGIVER QUOTES



"This is an excellent Newsletter. I do appreciate receiving it and read it faithfully. It is full of good information and reminders of the help available to support individuals. Thank you for providing this newsletter."

Quarterly Caregiver Newsletter Recipient



"I needed to know the information in the Caregiver Newsletter. I am suffering caregiver burnout and I am contemplating what to do about it. Reading the Caregiver Newsletter helped me to identify the burnout and to know that it is okay to make changes to help me."

Quarterly Caregiver Newsletter Recipient



"The Caregiver Webinar Series was extremely important and useful. A variety of information was presented for family caregivers, there was something for everyone. Also, it was nice to be reminded that self-care is not only okay, but that it is highly recommended!"

Caregiver Webinar Participant



"Thank you for these free Caregiver Webinar presentations, they have been a big help to me as I care for my wife with Alzheimer's."

Caregiver Webinar Participant



"The Kinship Care Program is WONDERFUL! Without it, my two granddaughters would not be able to participate in Gymnastics. The program has paid for them for the past four years."

Kinship Caregiver



"It was nice to know there were others who were having the same feelings as myself. This program helped me realize that it is okay and important to take care of myself first so that I can continue to take care of my parents."

Powerful Tools for Caregivers Participant



"Great conference, filled with great speakers, giveaways, and a whole lot of information. It reinforced the idea that I need and should be taking care of myself. A day well spent."

Caregiver Conference Participants

## REGION 9 AAA CAREGIVER RESOURCES



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE PROGRAMS CONTACT BROOKE AT 989.358.4616 OR MAINVILLEB@NEMCSA.ORG