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New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well Offers Information Series for NJ's Family Caregivers

Today in New Jersey, more than 1 million residents are serving as caregivers to family members or friends. While the exact roles may differ among families, all caregivers have common needs for support, training and recognition of their important role in our health care system.

As longevity rises and New Jersey's demographics shift towards an older population, the need for supportive services and are rising. At the same time New Jersey, like most of the United States, is facing a severe shortage in the workforce that provides community-based services and home care. This places an increasing burden on family caregivers.

Cathy Rowe, Executive Director of NJAAW sees a growing need for education and support for unpaid caregivers. "When family members take on the role of caregiver, they do so with love and dedication but without training, skills or knowledge of many of the realities and tasks involved." Recognizing this as a growing problem, NJAAW is hosting "Caregiving in New Jersey," a 3-part series connecting NJ caregivers with the information, skills and benefits they need to take care of their loved one as well as themselves.

Rowe states that "In bringing together experts in the realm of caregiving to discuss the needs of unpaid family and friends caring for older adults, this series will help caregivers understand the scope of care they might need to provide, find support and develop skills to care for their loved ones and themselves, and identify their rights and benefits like family leave."

The series begins March 1 with speakers Courtney Roman and Kathleen Otte focusing on "Defining Caregiving and its Impact on Family, Patients and Friends." Courtney Roman is a Senior Program Officer at the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS), where she works on initiatives related to improving care delivery and financing for individuals who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid and those in need of long-

term services and supports. She leads a variety of CHCS projects focused on family caregiving, the direct care workforce, and community and stakeholder engagement.

Kathleen Otte is the Regional Administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), within the Office of Program Operations and Local Engagement (OPOLE). In this capacity, she is responsible for outreach, stakeholder engagement and environmental scanning related to all of CMS' programs. Stakeholder engagement informs CMS of 'on the ground' impact of its policies, programs and initiatives.

Broken into 3 sessions held virtually on Wednesdays at 1pm, the Caregiving in NJ series will include:

- **March 1 - Defining Caregiving & its Impact on Family, Patients & Friends** with speakers Courtney Roman, Senior Program Officer at the Center for Health Care Strategies and Kathleen Otte, Regional Administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Office of Program Operations and Local Engagement (OPOLE).
- **March 8 - Finding Support & Building Skills** with speakers Mary Catherine Lundquist, Program Coordinator, Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care, Care2Caregivers/COPSA Institute and Robyn Kohn, Director of Programs and Services, Alzheimer's Association.
- **March 15 - Benefits: Family Leave, Respite Care, NJ Family Leave Insurance** with speakers Lauren Levant, VP Of Human Resources, Jewish Home Family; Jennifer L. Rutberg, Caregiver Program Specialist, Division of Aging Services; and Ellen Maughan, NJ Paid Leave Outreach Coalition.

This series, sponsored by ParkerLife, is free to NJ residents but registration is required. Registrants will have full access to recordings of the event.

To register, visit www.njaaw.org/events

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About NJAAW: NJ Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW, njaaw.org), formerly NJ Foundation for Aging, has been on the forefront of revolutionizing the aging experience since 1998. It is the only statewide nonprofit focused solely on providing leadership in public policy and education to enable older adults to live with independence and dignity in their communities. NJAAW's social action issues include senior housing and hunger, elder economic security, older workers, the direct care workforce, and transportation. The award-winning Aging Insights, a monthly topical TV program and podcast produced by NJAAW, connects caregivers, seniors and their families to community based services and resources. The show is available on youtube.com/user/njfoundationforaging/, NJAAW's website and on more than 70 public access TV stations. NJAAW also presents educational forums and an Annual

Conference offering development opportunities and best practices for professionals entrusted with caring for seniors