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RHODE ISLAND SENIOR BEAT

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KNOW THE RESOURCES FOR MANAGING YOUR CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITION

CRANSTON --- Chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart problems, respiratory illness, arthritis or long term emotional health issues have a negative impact on the quality of life for seniors and adults with disabilities. Often, those coping with chronic medical conditions don't know about the resources that can help them live a better life. Education, awareness and support are the keys to managing chronic diseases. The following organizations offer options that can help people live more independently in the community.

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program-Living Well Rhode Island are workshops held once a week, for six weeks, in community settings such as senior centers, churches, libraries and hospitals. Each workshop is two and a half hours. People with different chronic health problems attend together. Workshops are facilitated by two trained leaders, one or both of whom are non-health professionals with a chronic diseases themselves. Subjects covered include techniques to deal with problems such as frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation; appropriate exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility, and endurance; appropriate use of medications; communicating effectively with family, friends, and health professionals, nutrition; and how to evaluate new treatments. Call the Rhode Island Department of Health Information Line at 222-5960, or go to www.health.state.ri.us for details.

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According to the Alzheimer's Association, Rhode Island Chapter, there are more than 25,000 families in the state dealing with Alzheimer's disease. The Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to coordinate resources for caregivers, educate health professionals and the general public about the disease and advocate for improved public policy. For information, call 421-0008, or go to www.alz-ri.org.

More than 50,000 Rhode Islanders suffer from arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation, Northern & Southern NE Chapter, helps Rhode Islanders who have arthritis to cope with the disease through prevention, treatment, control and research for a possible cure of arthritis and related diseases. For information, call 739-3773, or go to www.arthritis.org.

At any one time, it is estimated that over 33,000 Rhode Islanders are living with cancer or are cancer survivors. The American Cancer Society is a nationwide, community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem. The ACS supports research, education and outreach, prevention and treatment projects for persons affected by this disease. For information, call 722-8480, or go to www.cancer.org.

An estimated 90,000 Rhode Islanders have diabetes. What's even more frightening is that 30,000 people don't even know that they have it! The American Diabetes Association seeks to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of people affected by diabetes. Call 1-800-342-2383 for information, or go to www.diabetes.org. The Rhode Island Department of Health also has valuable information about living with diabetes. Call 222-5960, or go to www.health.state.ri.us.

According to the Rhode Island DOH, cardiovascular disease, including heart disease and stroke, is the leading cause of death and disability in the nation. In Rhode Island, heart disease and stroke cause more deaths among men and women than any other disease. In the United States, the first leading cause of death is heart disease and the third is stroke. The American Heart Association is a non-profit organization that concentrates its efforts on cardiac care in an effort to reduce disability and deaths caused by cardiovascular disease and stroke. Their mission is "Building healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke." For information, call 330-1700, or go to www.heart.org.

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Among the elderly and adults with disabilities, mental health medical conditions can be hidden diseases. The Mental Health Association of Rhode Island provides information and referral for mental health services and support groups. Call 726-2285. The Rhode Island Council of Community Mental Health Organizations represents community mental health sites that assist individuals seeking information and referral about treatment. Call 228-7990, or visit their web site at www.riccmho.org.

The Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals fights against the stigmatization of people with developmental disabilities, mental illness, and substance use disorders and addictions. For information on developmental disabilities, call 462-3234. For information on mental health services, call 462-3291. For information about substance abuse, call 462-4680, or log on to www.dhddh.ri.gov.

There is also a 24-hour confidential drug and alcohol abuse Help Line at 1-866-252-3784. For information about compulsive gambling addiction resources, call the Rhode Island Problem Gambling Hotline at 1-877-942-6253

The Rhode Island Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society provides various programs and services, support groups, and other information for families affected by this chronic disease. The chapter is committed to improving the lives of approximately 2,000 Rhode Islanders living with MS and the thousands more who love and care about them. Call 738-8383, or go to www.nationalmssociety.org.

The Muscular Dystrophy Association is a voluntary national health agency comprised of a dedicated partnership between scientists and concerned citizens aimed at conquering neuromuscular diseases that affect more than a million Americans.

The local MDA chapter office is available to serve anyone with one of the neuromuscular diseases in the Association's program. Call 732-1910, or go to www.mda.org.

The Rhode Island Chapter of the American Parkinson Disease Association serves the patients and caregivers of Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts through the Information and Referral Center at Kent Hospital, and a number of support groups across the state. Call 823-5700, or go to www.riapda.org.

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The Department of Elderly Affairs was established as a cabinet-level position in 1977 under Rhode Island General Law 42-66-1. DEA is responsible for the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of programs and services for Rhode Islanders ages 60 and older and for adults with disabilities. DEA is also the state's single planning and service Area Agency on Aging under the provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965.