



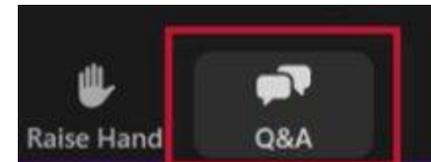
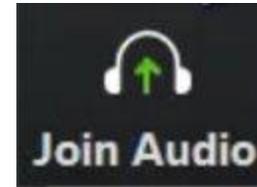
COMMIT TO  
*Connect*

# Supporting Social Connection of Caregivers

September 26, 2025

# Housekeeping

- **Audio Options**
  - Use your computer speakers, OR dial in using the phone number in your registration email.
  - All participants are muted.
- **Questions and Answers (Q&A)**
  - On the Zoom module on the bottom of your screen, click the Q&A icon, type your question in the box and submit.
  - For any questions that we aren't able to respond to, you may follow-up at [info@committoconnect.org](mailto:info@committoconnect.org).
- **Chat Feature**
  - The Chat feature allows webinar attendees, the host, co-hosts and panelists to communicate for the duration of the webinar.



# Accessibility and Support

- **ASL services are being provided today and will be pinned**
- **CART services are also being provided.**
  - Click on the CC Show Captions button or click on the link in the chat
- **Screen Reader Users: Reduce unwanted chatter**
  - Request speech on demand: Insert, Spacebar, “S”
- **To get our attention if you need tech assistance:**
  - Raise or Lower Hand: Alt + Y



# Presenters

**Katie Clark Wheeler**, Policy Analyst, Office of Interagency Innovation,  
Administration for Community Living

**Marvell Adams Jr**, Chief Executive Officer, Caregiver Action Network

**Julie Lowenthal**, Advocacy Manager, AgeWays Nonprofit Senior Services

**Aisha Adkins**, MPA, CNP, Carefluencer





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**Katie Clark Wheeler**  
Social Connection Lead, ACL



# Commit to Connect

COMBATting SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS IN ALL COMMUNITIES





# Commit to Connect

[www.committotconnect.org](http://www.committotconnect.org)

## ■ **Technical Assistance**

- *Annual National Summit to Increase Social Connections (September 2025)*
- Professional and consumer resources
- Webinars and Office Hours

## ■ **Communities of Practices on outcome evaluation**

- Impact of Chronic Disease Self-Management Education programs on social connection

## ■ **“Innovations Hub” to encourage replication**

- Clearinghouse of 100+ model programs, interventions, and solutions

## ■ **Engage an online Nationwide Network of Champions**

- 600+ leaders at local, state, and national levels

## Quick Links

-  [My Profile](#)
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## Recent Activity

 **RE: Engaging Rural Older Adults**  
Posted by: [Robert Lefkowitz](#), 22 hours ago

Posted In: [Open Forum Discussions](#)

Hi Carol, I'm a volunteer for Conversations to Remember. We're using virtual visits to reach seniors all over the country. All the senior needs is a tablet or computer, and they can meet with a set of ...

 **RE: Engaging Rural Older Adults**  
Posted by: [Keith Moore](#), 3 days ago

Posted In: [Open Forum Discussions](#)

Blooming Health offers a messaging platform optimized for older adults that can send group texts, emails and voice calls in over 70 languages. It can be used for event reminders, wellness checks, and surveys, ...

 **RE: Engaging Rural Older Adults**  
Posted by: [Robert Signore](#), 3 days ago

Posted In: [Open Forum Discussions](#)

Hi Carol, Technology can help with rural older adults since transportation can

## Take Action!

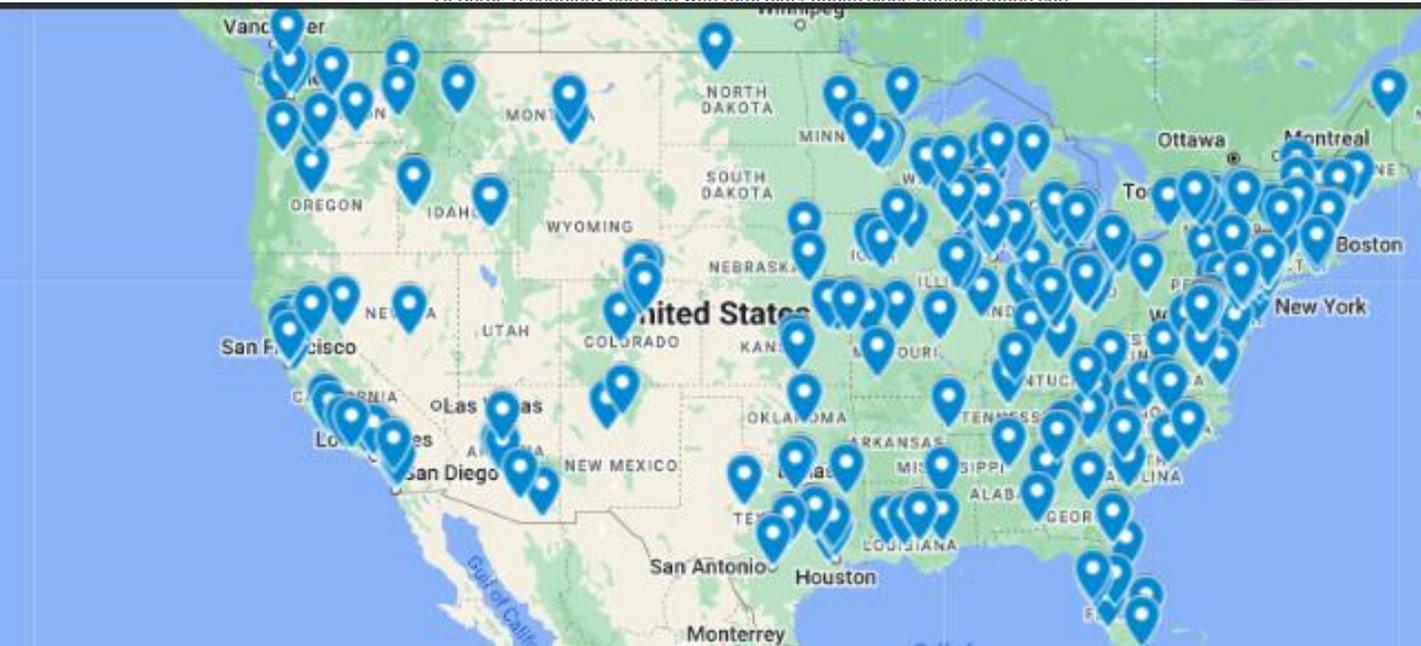


## Recent Blogs

 **Meet a Commit to Connect Champion: Lori Murphy**  
By [Ali Fehlhaber](#)

 **Meet a Commit to Connect Champion: Jan Amys**  
By [Ali Fehlhaber](#)

# CTC Nationwide Network of Champions





# Innovations Hub

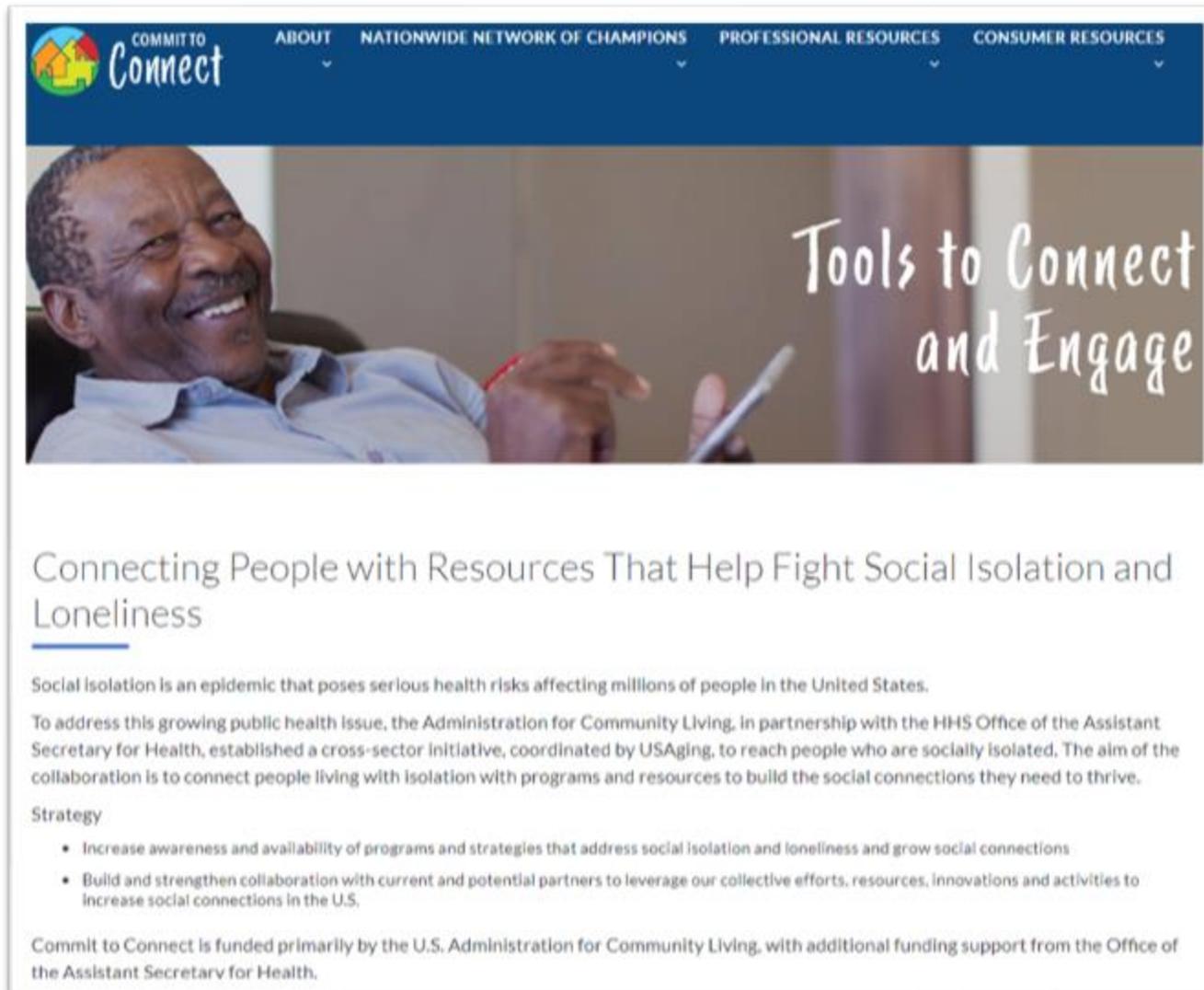
[committoconnect.org/innovations-hub](https://committoconnect.org/innovations-hub)

Filter Sort

Organization Name	City, State	Brief Description	Intervention Type	Population Served	Geographic Population Served	Organization Type	Partners Involved	Funding Source	Description
Caring Together, Living Better AgeOptions	Oak Park, IL	Partnering with faith-based groups to offer social engagement activities for Black and Hispanic family caregivers.	Intergenerational Technology	Older Adults Caregivers	Suburban Urban	Area Agency on Aging	Aging and Disability Resource Ce...	Private/philanthropic grant	Program Description AgeOptions, an Area Agency on Aging based in Oak Park, IL,
Friendly Phone Calling Decatur Catholic Charities – Faith in...	Decatur, IL	Older adults who are homebound received phone calls from friendly volunteers.	Intergenerational Volunteerism	Older Adults People with Disability	Rural Urban Suburban	Other Community-Based Organi...	Area Agency on Aging Faith-base	Older Americans Act Private/phila	Program Description Faith in Action of Macon County provides friendly phone calling
ONEgeneration Letters to O... ONEgeneration	Van Nuys, CA	This letter writing program allows older adults and students to connect without using technology.	Intergenerational Arts and Creati	Older Adults	Suburban Urban	Aging Services Provider	Intergenerational groups Nutritic	Private/philanthropic grant Other	Program Description In a world where access to digital resources can improve overall social
COAST-IT (Connecting Olde... University of Colorado Anschutz Mu...	Denver, CO	Pairs college students studying health with older adults for intergenerational social phone calls.	Health and Wellness Intergenera	Older Adults	Rural Frontier Suburban Urt	University	Aging and Disability Resource Ce...	Other	Program Description The University of Colorado (CU) Anschutz Division of Geriatrics and
Fairfax County Virtual Cent... Fairfax County Department of Neig...	Fairfax, VA	Virtual senior center developed in response to closures of in-person senior centers and adult day health centers due to the COVID-19 ...	Arts and Creative Expression Heal	Older Adults People with Disability	Suburban	Senior Center	Aging and Disability Resource Ce...		Program Description At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, senior centers, adult day

# Commit to Connect

[www.committtoconnect.org](http://www.committtoconnect.org)



COMMIT TO Connect

ABOUT NATIONWIDE NETWORK OF CHAMPIONS PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES CONSUMER RESOURCES

Tools to Connect and Engage

## Connecting People with Resources That Help Fight Social Isolation and Loneliness

Social isolation is an epidemic that poses serious health risks affecting millions of people in the United States.

To address this growing public health issue, the Administration for Community Living, in partnership with the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, established a cross-sector initiative, coordinated by USAging, to reach people who are socially isolated. The aim of the collaboration is to connect people living with isolation with programs and resources to build the social connections they need to thrive.

Strategy

- Increase awareness and availability of programs and strategies that address social isolation and loneliness and grow social connections
- Build and strengthen collaboration with current and potential partners to leverage our collective efforts, resources, innovations and activities to increase social connections in the U.S.

Commit to Connect is funded primarily by the U.S. Administration for Community Living, with additional funding support from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health.





Caregiver Isolation

# The Importance of Creating a Support Network



# Caregiver Action Network (CAN)

Promotes resourcefulness and respect for the 63 million family caregivers nationally.

## OUR GOALS

Create Resourceful Caregivers

Reduce Caregiver Stress

Create Respect for Family Caregivers

Create Capable Caregivers



A man with glasses and a beard is sitting in a chair, holding a cup. The scene is dimly lit, with a radiator and a potted plant visible in the background. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

# Let's Talk About: *Isolation*

# What is “caregiver isolation”?

This will look unique to every caregiver but it is the feeling that leaves caregivers asking, *Does anyone know what I am going through?*

- Feeling **disconnected** from family, friends, and community.
- Feeling **unseen** (or even **unappreciated**) in your role as a caregiver.
- Feeling **unsupported** in your role as a caregiver.



# What cause's caregiver isolation?

- **Time demands** – Caregiving can feel constant and makes it difficult to juggle the other roles and responsibilities we have outside of caregiving.
- **Emotional exhaustion** – The day-to-day stress of caregiving can zap our social energy.
- **Financial stress** – Financial strain related to out-of-pocket costs for care can take a significant toll on caregivers.
- **Lack of understanding** – Not being connected to others they feel understand what they are going through can amplify those feelings of isolation.





# The Importance of Connection

# Why Peer Support Matters for Caregivers

- **You Are Not Alone** – Caregiving can feel isolating, but peer support connects you with people who truly understand.
- **Reduces Stress & Burnout** – Talking with others eases anxiety and provides emotional relief.
- **Practical Tips & Advice** – Learn real-world strategies on healthcare, behaviors, and self-care.
- **Emotional Strength & Encouragement** – You're doing your best, and support helps you feel reassured.
- **Sustains Your Caregiving Role** – Self-care isn't selfish—support helps prevent burnout.
- **Builds Lifelong Connections** – Many caregivers form deep friendships through shared experiences.



# Peer Power: CAN's Support Circle

Family caregivers often feel isolated, but **peer support makes a difference**. Through various platforms, caregivers can find guidance, encouragement, and connection:

- **Caregiver Action Network's Help Desk** – A dedicated resource for one-on-one support, providing expert guidance tailored to caregivers' unique challenges.
- **Kindly Human** – A 24/7 peer support network that offers real-time, judgment-free conversations with trained listeners who understand the caregiving journey.
- **Caregiver Action Network's Community Facebook Page** – A space for caregivers to connect with peers, share experiences, and exchange advice in a supportive online environment.



An elderly couple is seated at a wooden table in a kitchen setting. The man, on the left, has white hair and is wearing glasses and a light-colored button-down shirt. The woman, on the right, has short grey hair and is wearing glasses and a grey sweater. They are both smiling warmly at each other. On the table in front of them are two white mugs, a white teapot, and a white bowl. The background shows a kitchen counter with a stove and a white shelving unit with various items. The entire image has a light blue tint.

# Resources You Can Use Right Now



# Caregiver Action Network National Help Desk

A dedicated resource for one-on-one support, providing expert guidance tailored to caregivers' unique challenges.



CAREGIVER  
HELP DESK  
855.227.3640

CaregiverAction.org

[CaregiverAction.org/helpdesk](https://www.CaregiverAction.org/helpdesk)



Kindly,  
Human™

## Peer-To-Peer Support For Family Caregivers

**Caregiver Action Network** is proud to partner with **Kindly Human** because we believe in the power of humans connecting with humans. It all starts with support. This partnership includes a core foundation of support services for all organizations and members, as well as exclusive family caregiver integrations.

[CaregiverAction.org/kindly-human](https://CaregiverAction.org/kindly-human)



## Join our CAN Community on Facebook!

**Caregiver Action Network** has private Facebook group with over 2,700 peer caregivers. This group connects families across the U.S. and beyond across the lifespan to come together and share their experiences, ask questions, and share resources that have made a difference for them.

CAN Staff also hold bi-weekly *Real Talk* sessions with informal conversations about wide array of topics.

**To join, simply search *Caregiver Action Network Community* in Facebook's search field.**

# Stay Connected



[www.CaregiverAction.org](http://www.CaregiverAction.org)



855-227-3640



[info@CaregiverAction.org](mailto:info@CaregiverAction.org)



@CaregiverActionNetwork



@Caregiver-Action-Network



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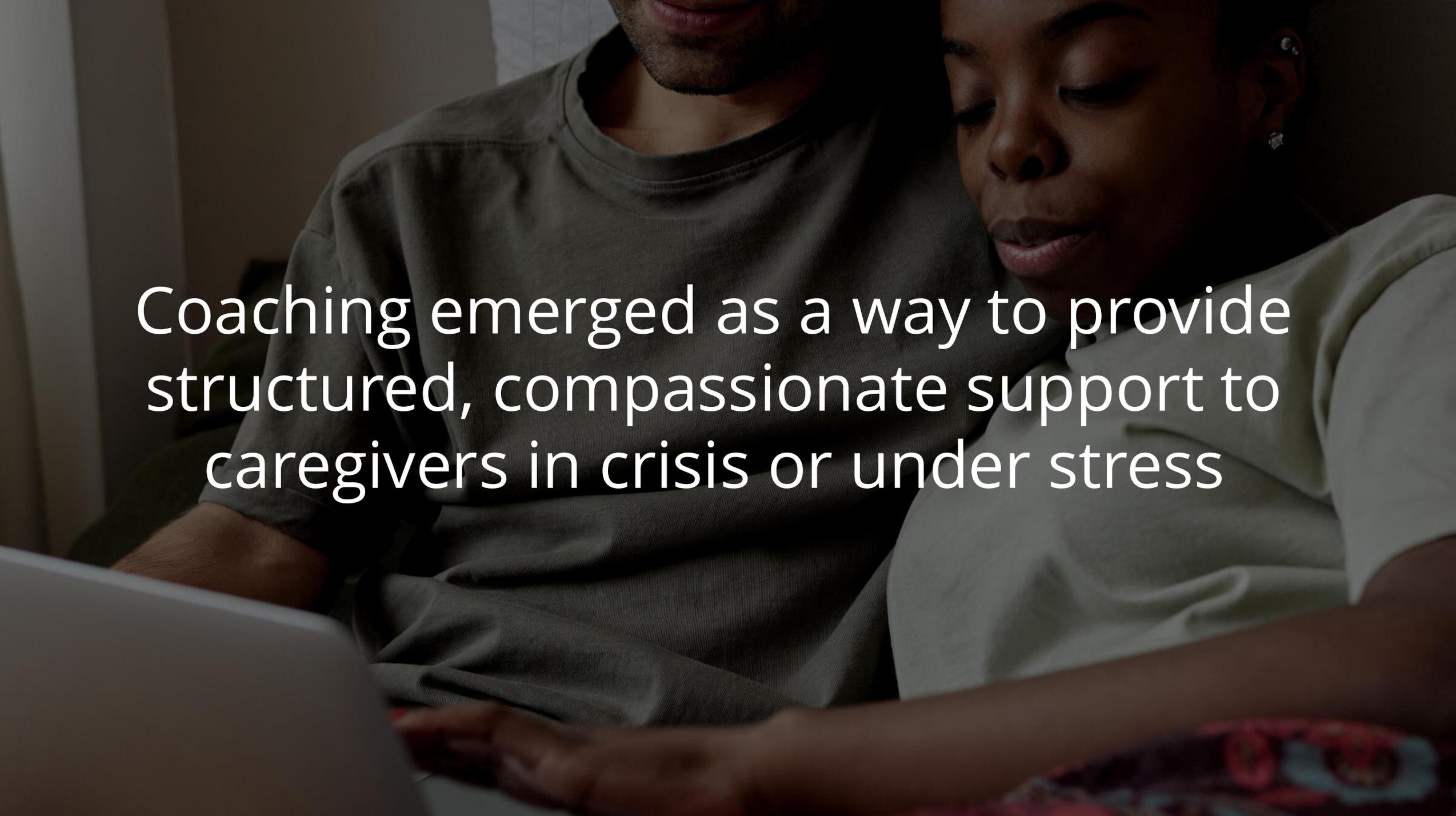
Technology, Learning, and Life

# Caregiver Coaching

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Julie Lowenthal, Advocacy  
Manager  
[Ageways.org](https://www.ageways.org)



A man and a woman are sitting together, looking at a laptop screen. The man is on the left, wearing a grey t-shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored top. They appear to be in a home setting, possibly a living room. The lighting is soft and focused on the laptop screen, which is partially visible in the bottom left corner. The overall mood is collaborative and focused.

Coaching emerged as a way to provide structured, compassionate support to caregivers in crisis or under stress

# History of the Program



Originated in 2010: Westchester County Dept. of Senior Programs & Services + Fordham University (NY).



Brought to Southeast Michigan in 2020 by AAA 1-B, starting in Livingston & Washtenaw Counties.



Expanded in 2021 to Oakland and Macomb due to early success.



Program linked family caregivers with trained volunteer coaches for one-on-one support.

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# About the Program

- Core Model: A free, volunteer-based program pairing caregivers with trained coaches for one-on-one support.
- Role of Coaches:
  - Former caregivers themselves in most cases.
  - Trained to act as advisors, cheerleaders, resource navigators, and listening partners.
- Flexibility:
  - Caregiver-driven: frequency, communication method, and focus are tailored to individual needs.
  - Options range from monthly phone check-ins to regular brainstorming or resource assistance.
- Volunteer Standards:
  - Training and monthly peer check-ins.
  - Commitment to confidentiality, with HIPAA privacy training in place.



# Positives & Impact

Supportive Relationships: Many caregivers built strong, lasting bonds with coaches

## Improved Outcomes:

67% accessed new resources.  
64% reported higher confidence.  
Stress levels dropped from 86% ("stressed some/all the time") to 45%.  
Decrease in isolation reported

Volunteer Satisfaction: Coaches rated their experience 87% positive.

Testimonials: Caregivers valued accountability, encouragement, and emotional relief.

# Challenges and Barriers



## Structural Gaps:

Lack of clear job descriptions and standardized procedures at launch.

## Recruitment and Retention:

Coaches were sometimes unaware of other agency programs for referrals.

## Charting and Continuity:

Reliance on volunteers who were themselves often caregivers created turnover and instability.

Mon Ami platform underused; many volunteers unfamiliar with digital systems.

Lack of systematic documentation—caregivers had to repeat stories when reassigned.

## No On/Off Ramp:

No defined entry or graduation points for caregivers, leaving participants without a clear pathway in or out of services.

# Lessons Learned & Recommendations



01 Build Structure First: Clear job descriptions, standardized onboarding, and standard operating procedures are essential.

■ 02 Create On- and Off-Ramps: Establish defined processes for intake and graduation. Examples: phasing support down over time, or transitioning stable caregivers into peer coach roles.

■ 03 Implement Charting Solutions: Simple, consistent recordkeeping—either paper or digital—with training provided.

■ 04 Prioritize Need: Use tools such as the Caregiver Intensity Index to focus coaching on those in crisis, while others may benefit from lighter-touch reassurance or referrals.

05 Volunteer Development: Provide regular training, peer support, and flexible engagement opportunities to sustain retention.



# Conclusion

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- Reflection: The Caregiver Coaching Program demonstrated that personalized, relationship-based support has meaningful impact on caregiver confidence, stress reduction, and well-being.
- Acknowledgement of Challenges: Sustainability requires stronger systems, clearer procedures, and stable funding.
- Closing Thought: As the program pauses and is re-envisioned, these lessons provide a foundation for building a more resilient, scalable caregiver support model in the future.

# Commit to Connect

**How Carefluencers Create Connection**

Aisha Adkins, MPA, CNP



# AISHA ADKINS, MPA, CNP

- Dunwoody, GA (Cherokee Land)
- Family care partner
- Founder
- Organizer
- Advocate
- Writer
- Speaker
- Researcher





**CAREGIVER**

**2013 – PRESENT**



## THE STATISTICS

According to the Family Caregiver Alliance, "40–70% of family caregivers experience clinical symptoms of depression, which can often be caused by feelings of isolation and loneliness associated with the caregiving experience."



# A NEW PATH TO FORGE

- Fear → Knowledge
- Confusion → Understanding
- Hopelessness → Opportunity
- Loneliness → Community



# SOCIAL MEDIA

More and more, people are choosing to share their care partner journeys on social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

Social media is a great tool to help normalize the caregiver experience. It's also a free, more accessible resource than some other forms of engagement.



**Jacquelyn Revere**  
@momofmymom



**Jessica C. Guthrie**  
@careercaregivingcolide



# SOCIAL MEDIA

- You can also find connection through social media groups and forums
- Post questions, find answers
- Receive validation
- Make friends
- Find support



# TRADITIONAL MEDIA

- Care influencers often share stories of care in traditional media like newspapers, magazines, talk shows, and podcasts
- This engagement helps elevate the caregiver experience and increase visibility, thus changing the culture around care
- It points people in the right direction for connection



## THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY

- Feeling seen
- Connecting through shared experiences
- Sharing ideas and solutions
- Witnessing each other's pain and triumphs
- Creating lifelong bonds
- Improving mental resilliance



# GET IN TOUCH!

Aisha would love to hear from you, so please feel free to reach out!



[aishaadkins.com](https://aishaadkins.com)



[facebook.com/officialaishaadkins](https://facebook.com/officialaishaadkins)



[instagram.com/@aisha.adkins](https://instagram.com/@aisha.adkins)



[tiktok.com/aishaadkins](https://tiktok.com/aishaadkins)



[bsky.app/profile/aishaadkins.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/aishaadkins.bsky.social)





# Questions and Discussion

Please submit your questions or comments through the Q&A.

# Thank you!

- Please complete the survey which will be displayed in your browser after Zoom closes.
- The recording will be available on [www.committtoconnect.org/events](http://www.committtoconnect.org/events)
- For further questions, contact us at: [info@committtoconnect.org](mailto:info@committtoconnect.org)

