

# THE CENTER FOR VOLUNTEER CAREGIVING

Matching family caregivers with trained respite volunteers



## WHAT WE DO

The Center for Volunteer Caregiving (The Center) has provided family caregiver respite services for nearly 25 years with trained community volunteers. In FY2024, 39 volunteers provided **1,928 hours of respite to 39** family caregivers living in Wake County, North Carolina. Volunteers are carefully matched with families, taking into consideration shared characteristics such as language, culture, and interests. In partnership, the volunteers and caregivers plan and schedule respite based on availability and the family's needs and priorities.

## OUR EVALUATION ACTIVITIES



Through the ARCH Respite Evaluation Project<sup>1</sup>, The Center examined and significantly changed the way it evaluated respite services.

**Prior to October 2023**, evaluations were conducted once a year for all clients through a mail-in form or online link. No evidence-based tools were used.

**Beginning October 2023**, data collection is timed with the start of services, including 2-month follow-up and an annual evaluation on service anniversary. Follow-ups are conducted through phone calls by a Caregiver Support Manager. To increase the rigor

of our evaluation inquiry, we began using the Zarit Scale of Caregiver Burden, an evidence-based tool developed and tested with a population similar to caregivers served by The Center.

## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT OUR FAMILIES

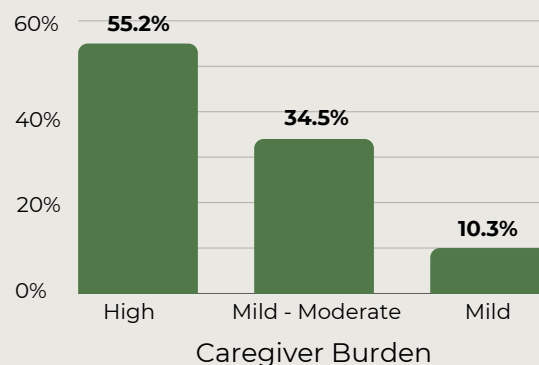
The Zarit Sale for Caregiver Burden revealed that at the onset of receiving respite, 90% of the caregivers we serve were experiencing moderate to high levels of caregiver burden, with over 50% scoring in the High range. <sup>2</sup>

After receiving respite from our trained volunteers over a period of 12 months, caregivers reported increases in indicators of well-being, with over 60% reporting the respite they received reduced stress in caring for their loved one, less burn out, and more optimism about their ability to manage their loved one's care at home. <sup>3</sup>

## NEW EVALUATION STRATEGIES RESULTED IN . . .

- higher return rates on evaluation measures
- more accurate results, and
- improved communication between caregiver and caregiver support staff.

Most caregivers are experiencing moderate to high levels of caregiver burden. N=29



***"(Respite) gives me hope that we can keep going. Just knowing that I have those hours every week, relieves my stress. I know that I can take care of things." -Teresa***

<sup>1</sup> The Center for Volunteer Caregiving was recognized by the ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center as an Innovative and Exemplary Respite Service in 2022, and was part of an Innovative and Exemplary Respite Services Evaluation Initiative.

<sup>2</sup> We look forward to comparing pre-test scores with post-test scores after caregivers have received a year of service. For details of other tools used, or information about our evaluation process and results, contact Elaine Whitford, ewhitford@ctrvolcare.org.

<sup>3</sup> From The Center's 2023 caregiver survey.

***"(Respite) allowed me to take the time to do what I want to do. It's given me freedom and is my time."***

**-Rosemary**

## PERSON- AND FAMILY-CENTERED PLANNING

Research evidence indicates that caregivers who are very satisfied with their use of respite time have significantly lower depression scores than those who are not satisfied.<sup>4</sup> The Center intentionally helps caregivers to plan and use their respite time in ways that support individual preferences and needs.



### OF CAREGIVERS SURVEYED (N=29) . . .

**100%**

reported their respite time was enjoyable and/or beneficial to their well-being

**100%**

were satisfied with how they used their respite time

**100%**

of caregivers would recommend The Center's respite services to a friend

***"When (the volunteer) visits, she helps me laugh. I feel more uplifted... We may not laugh during the day if it is just the two of us."*** -Jan

## FROM CAREGIVER TO RESPITE VOLUNTEER: A FULL CIRCLE



Ed had been a long-time caregiver for his wife, Judy, who had been living with dementia for about ten years before Ed became a client in The Center's respite program. His devoted volunteer, Julie, volunteered with him through the worst of the COVID pandemic until Judy passed away in 2021.

When Elaine Whitford, The Center's Executive Director, enrolled Ed in the respite program, he told her that he hoped to give back to The Center one day as a volunteer. "Even though he wasn't ready to volunteer right after his wife passed away," Elaine said, "he stayed in touch with The Center's staff. Now he is a volunteer in the same program, providing much-needed respite for another family caregiver in our community."

Ed, a retired golf pro, says, "Life is all about helping each other." He became a volunteer at the end of 2023 and provides regular respite visits to Carol and Edward, a couple who live close to him. Ed expressed his gratitude to have found friendship and connection with Carol and Edward. He spends his visits talking with Edward about his interesting life and playing games like "Uno".

Carol and Edward look forward to Ed's visits. "Ed brightens our day and is a light in our lives," Carol told us. "We love Ed!" She added that Ed being a former caregiver makes a difference as he genuinely understands what she is going through. Ed has added an evening every month to his respite schedule so Carol can attend a monthly meeting. "Ed goes above and beyond," she says. "Receiving services from The Center means a lot."

***"Respite enables me to go out and relax for a while. When I get back, my husband is smiling. (The volunteer) is good for my husband."*** -Jo

<sup>4</sup> Lund, D.A., Utz, R., Caserta, M.S., and Wright, S.D. (2009). Examining What Caregivers Do During Respite Time to Make Respite More Effective. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 28 (1): 109-131.

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