



Beyond Respite: Creating a Supportive Community for Caregivers

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2025 National Lifespan Respite Conference
April 2025

Intro

The TRC Legacy

For over twenty years, the Tennessee Respite Coalition has been dedicated to supporting caregivers through programs like the Respite Voucher Program and the AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program.

These initiatives have offered essential respite services, helping caregivers manage their responsibilities and reduce stress.



Our Team

Dr. Megan Schwalm

Executive Director



Jack Read

Program and Development Director



Breion Dixon

Outreach Manager



Annisha Bell

Helpline Coordinator



Reina Beach

Volunteer Coordinator



Why We're Here

In 2023, we conducted a strategic planning process, gathering input from:

- ✓ Caregivers
- ✓ Community partners
- ✓ Key stakeholders

Their feedback revealed two urgent needs: **relief from isolation** and **opportunities** for networking and resource sharing.

In response, we rebranded as the **Tennessee Caregiver Coalition**, signaling our commitment to fostering connection, support, and empowerment for family caregivers.



Casper Day, Caregiver Appreciation 2024

Why

We Changed Our Name



The change reflects:

- A broader mission **beyond** respite care
- A commitment to building a caregiver-focused community
- A response to feedback from caregivers & stakeholders

This shift wasn't just about a name—it was about *redefining* how we support caregivers across Tennessee.

New Changes at TCC

Caregiver Support Groups

Caregiver Events (Recreational)

Caregiver Events (Educational)

Caregiver Ambassador Program

Emergency Respite Program

Caregiver Support Groups

When we first started out, we went for the 'low hanging fruit' regarding programming.

Low hanging fruit = programs that are simple, require low staff capacity, and fill an expressed need for caregivers.



General Support Group

Our first support group was held online on May 1st, 2024 from 6pm-8pm and had 12 caregivers participate across the state of TN.

Since then, we've expanded to add a second support group and 67 caregivers have attended 2 or more support group sessions!



Caregiver Peer Support Group

4TH MONDAY OF EACH MONTH

6PM CENTRAL STANDARD TIME

VIRTUAL ON ZOOM

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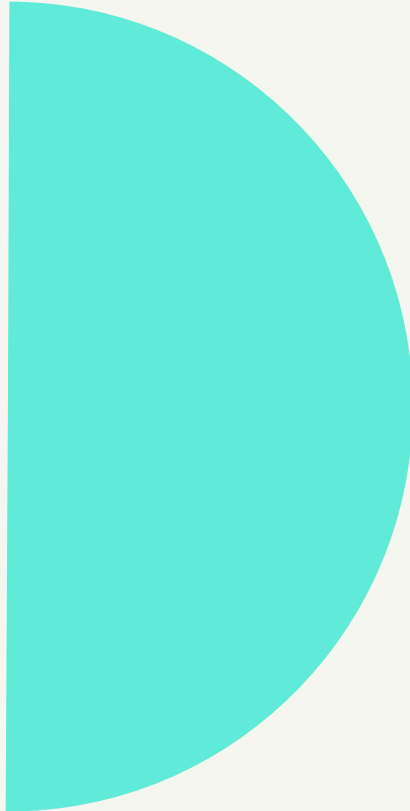
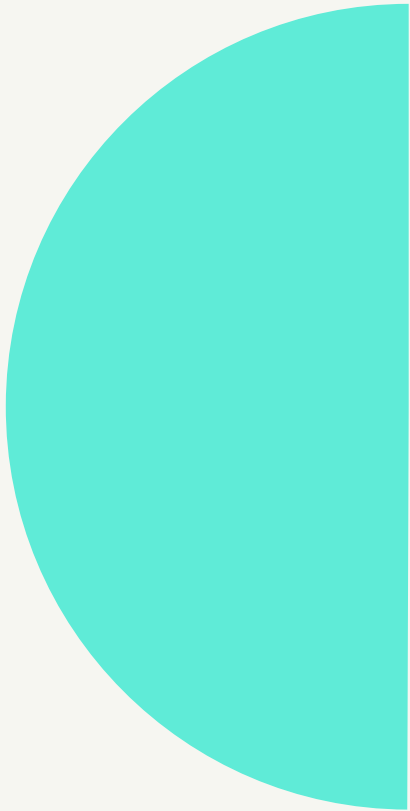
PASSCODE: 2003

EMAIL
RESPITE@TNCAREGIVER.ORG
TO REGISTER



What We Offer:

- **Peer Connection:** Connect with fellow caregivers who share similar experiences.
- **Safe Space:** A confidential and non-judgmental environment to express yourself.
- **Resource Sharing:** Exchange valuable tips, resources, and coping strategies.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Gain insights and support from those who walk a similar path.



" I love the Caregiver Support groups y'all have on Skype... or is it Zoom? I'm not very tech savvy, but I get the people at Kinkos to help me log on to the group. Keep up the great work! We really need it as caregivers."

ZADIE JEFFERSON, 10/24/2024

Caring in Color

The Caring in Color group was created due to the interest in our General Virtual Support group. A large number of our caregivers are from the African American community, so we enlisted our African American staff to host this group.

We have seen explosive growth since our first meeting on June 3rd, 2024. We began with just **4** caregivers attending, but now have **45** caregivers that have attended 2 or more support group sessions!



Tennessee Caregiver Coalition

CARING IN COLOR: A SUPPORT GROUP FOR BLACK CAREGIVERS

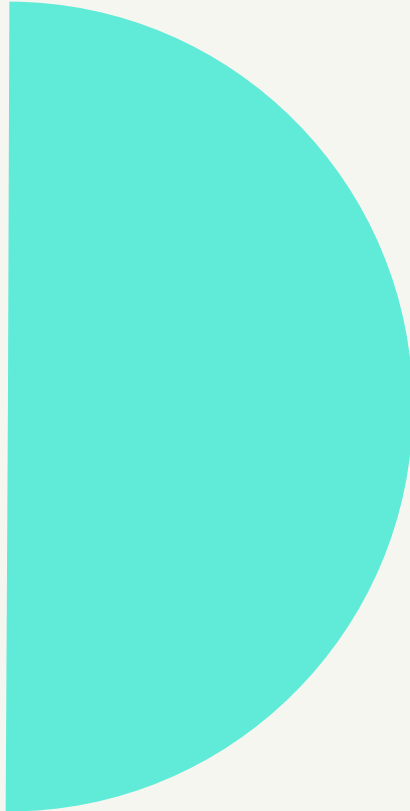
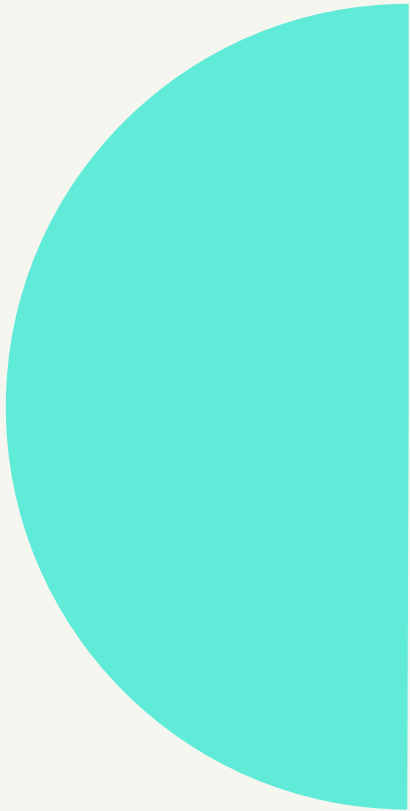
Caring in Color hopes to create a network of understanding and support among caregivers in the Black Community. Connect with other local caregivers, get support, and share resources!

Join us on Zoom

Every 1st Tuesday
6PM-8PM CST



Funded by a grant from the Healing Trust Foundation



"When I heard
'black', I had to see
what this was talking
about! I can't believe
there is someone
doing something for
black caregivers."

IRIS FLAG, CARING IN COLOR PARTICIPANT

7/8/2024

Caregiver Events (recreational)

The key takeaway from the caregiver feedback was the need for **spaces** where all our caregivers can connect with others facing similar challenges.

We got to work creating those spaces...again starting with the 'low hanging fruit' approach.

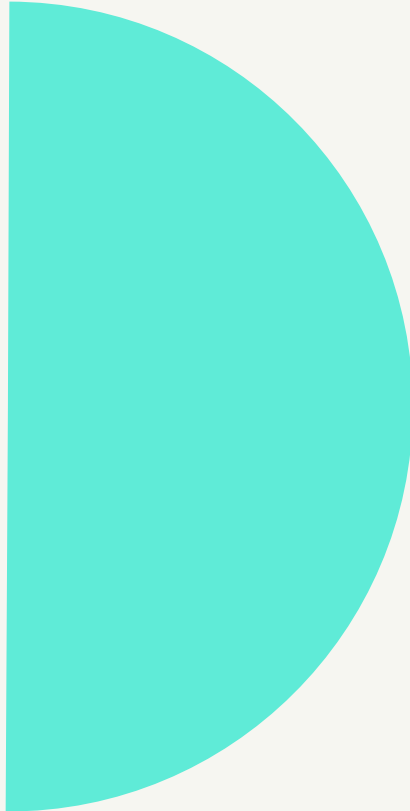
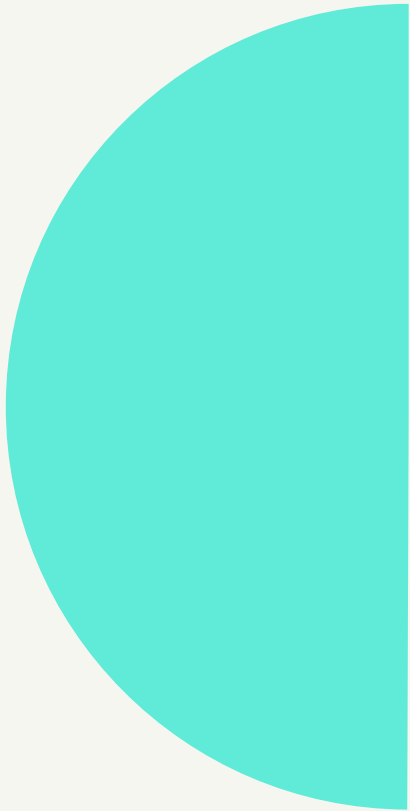


Caregiver Happy Hours

The first events we began holding for caregivers were low-key meetup events where caregivers could come enjoy a drink (on us) and connect with others that are taking care of those they love. We partnered with TailGate Brewery, where they provided the space and a discount on the drinks/pizza!

Low hanging fruit= No intense prep-work...we just had to show up! We had 3 happy hour events in 2024.





“ I had a ball!! I was so comfortable and it feels great to know that I am not alone.”

ChaNelle Matthews, Happy Hour participant

Caring in Color Walk

Wellness is one of our values we take pride in at TCC, so another 'low-hanging fruit' event was a walk we organized at a local park.

We met caregivers on a Saturday morning, and just walked the trail together. Again, our goal was to provide a **space** where caregivers can connect with each other.

Events don't have to be fancy or cost money to make an impact!



Art Group

Caregiver
ART GROUP



Join us for a special art activity exclusively for caregivers, hosted by our very own Executive Director at the TCC office! All materials will be provided, so just bring yourself and your creativity!

TIME
1:00 - 3:00 PM

DATE
27 July, 2024

LOCATION



Caregiver Art Group

This event was held at the TCC office. Caregivers worked to submit this art piece for the Under One Roof Nonprofit Art Exhibition in 2024. Very simple event, with limited supplies (and thus budget) needed.



Caregiver Events (educational)

The second most prevalent need among our caregivers was opportunities for caregiver **education** and **resource sharing**.

We began working with local partners to provide these opportunities immediately.

Teaching Tuesday

Caregiver Resource Fair



Teaching Tuesday

Our first attempt at providing an educational space for caregivers was our virtual Teaching Tuesday program.

We partnered with local organizations that provide caregiver education (for free) through guest speakers and had them present to our caregivers online.

Teaching Tuesday was once per month, and all sessions were recorded for those that could not attend the live session.

Low hanging fruit = using resources that are free and

available to support caregivers

Caregiver Events (educational)

see
site
tion

TEACHING TUESDAYS

Join us online for FREE caregiver training and resources!

Topic: Resources for Parents of Children with Disabilities

APRIL 16

3PM-4PM

[CLICK HERE](#)



Caregiver Resource Fair

This was our first 'high hanging fruit' event. It took support from our entire staff to pull it all together, but this event can be easily replicated on a smaller scale by organizations where capacity is a concern.

We had a total of **15** vendors and over **50** caregivers and their family members in attendance.

TENNESSEE
CAREGIVER COALITION

CAREGIVER RESOURCE FAIR

SEEKING VENDORS

SEPT 28 11AM-2PM



RESPITE PROVIDERS
ARE YOU AN ORGANIZATION THAT PROVIDES RESPITE CARE? WE WANT YOU!



RESPITE RESOURCES
DO YOU PROVIDE FUNDING OR OTHER RESOURCES TO CAREGIVERS? WE WANT YOU!



AGENCY CONNECTIONS
ARE YOU A PARTNER AGENCY OF TCC? WE WANT YOU!

VENDOR REGISTRATION

VOLUNTEER@TNCAREGIVER.ORG

EVENT INFO

📍 Nashville School for the Arts
1250 Foster Ave
Nashville TN 37210



Vendor Fees



**For-Profit
Organizations**

- \$150
- includes table and two chairs



**Non-Profit
Organizations**

- \$50
- Includes table and two chairs

Record

97% of caregivers that responded to our event feedback surveys reported that they found TCC events **helpful**.

90% of caregivers that responded to the survey reported that TCC events give them a sense of **community**.

SINCE WE BEGAN

our mission to become more responsive to the needs of caregivers in 2023, we've provided a total of **40** different opportunities for caregivers and their families to both **connect** and **share resources**.

What went

Well?

- Virtual Events (during evening times)
- In-Person Caregiver Events with low set-up
- Create a space, allow caregivers to fill it with what they need.

What could be Better

- We found that in-person events are very difficult for average caregivers to attend on a regular basis.
- Providing respite care during our events increased participation.
- Expanding in-person events to Memphis, Knoxville, etc.
- Providing more specialized caregiver programming, based off care recipient diagnosis/age group

Start

Stop

Continue

- Caregiver Ambassador Program
- Youth Caregiver Group
- Parents Night Out Program

- Teaching Tuesdays
(low attendance due to it being held during the day)

- Caregiver Resource Fair (to be combined with Caregiver Appreciation in 2025)
- Caregiver Happy Hours
- Support Groups

Discuss

WHAT IS YOUR 'LOW HANGING FRUIT'?

Break up into groups of 2-4 (preferably with someone in your organization) and discover how you can engage caregivers.

1. Do you have the **capacity** for virtual or in-person events?
2. What staff members on your team can **dedicate time** to engaging caregivers?
3. What is some low-effort or 'low-hanging fruit' you can do **NOW** to help caregivers?
4. What resources/systems do you have already **in place** that can be used to engage caregivers?

Action

WHAT ACTIONS CAN YOU START NOW?

Take up to 5 minutes to jot down a plan of action. Think of **3** 'low hanging fruit' opportunities to either start or continue.

What to Start

What to Continue



TENNESSEE CAREGIVER COALITION

Final Thought: Our team is small, but mighty. We were able respond and started building a sense of community among caregivers with few hands and even fewer resources.

Allow your caregivers the *space*, and they will fill it with what they need.