Caregiving: Our Journey Together
Welcome to Keiro Connect: Spring 2021 Edition!

Throughout my time at Keiro, I have learned how to prepare for caregiving for my own family – not just the nuts and bolts, but also emotionally and mentally.

This past year has been challenging for us all. Amidst the pandemic, I was caregiving, along with my siblings, for our parents. Due to various restrictions, it was more difficult to coordinate care, assess options, and spend quality time with family. And then my mother and father unexpectedly passed within four months of each other. But what helped make our caregiving journey smoother was the support from friends, family, and Our Community. For me, last year was a reminder that I was not alone.

As each of us goes through our own caregiving journeys, know that you are not alone. Caregiving for our loved ones will never be easy, but there are things we can do to make it even just a bit less stressful. Prepare in advance by asking for help, seeking resources, and taking care of yourself. And know that we are all here to support one another.

Take care, be safe, and thank you for all that you do to care for older adults in Our Community!

Gene S. Kanamori
President & CEO

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Keiro virtually celebrated their 20th anniversary of the Caregiver Conference on March 13, 2021, welcoming 250+ caregivers to the event. The event covered caregiving tips during the pandemic, advice from past caregivers, and important information, such as the five tips when finding an in-home caregiver.

I also felt the keynote presentation and the past caregiver panel breakout session really reinforced the importance of not feeling guilty. You may think, “Oh, I should have done this or that,” but resist those thoughts and try the best you can. There’s no perfect way to do this. That message was very helpful to hear.

I’m also thankful that this conference was held virtually. If this year’s event was in-person, I would probably not have been able to attend. I honestly don’t remember too much about the specifics from the first few caregiver conferences I’ve attended, but this idea that there is help out there was powerful. Because I was given this idea during the past caregiver panel, it reinforced the importance of not feeling guilty. You may think, “Oh, I should have done this or that,” but resist those thoughts and try the best you can. There’s no perfect way to do this. That message was very helpful to hear.

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By Dexter Yuen

My mother is in remarkably good health despite her age. She can care for herself, but her memory and hearing have declined quite a bit over the years.

Due to the pandemic, my mother is temporarily living with me away from her home. However, with her receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, we are now comfortable looking into options available to us, based on her needs and our family situation. I also enrolled my mom in Iyashi Care, Keiro’s palliative care program, right after she moved in with me.

Keiro has been an immense help in my caregiving journey. I began attending the annual Caregiver Conference almost six or seven years ago, and it has become something I would expect to attend every year. It definitely prepared me for this role.

This year’s 20th anniversary Caregiver Conference was a timely one for me. The resource fair vendors provided me with important information, such as the five tips when finding an in-home caregiver.

I currently care for my mother, who is 98 years old. Before, my siblings would take care of my mother, but with the passing of both my brother and sister this past year, I became my mother’s sole caregiver.

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A Lineage of Care: Diana and Megan Ono’s Caregiving Across Generations

For mother-daughter pair Diana Ono and Megan Ono, caring for others is a role and a purpose that has been passed down in their family for generations. Diana and Megan are caregivers to Diana’s parents, Tatsuo and Tomiko Ando, and Megan’s paternal grandmother, Dorothy Ono, before she passed away at age 98 in March 2020.

Diana shared that she and Megan inherited this legacy of caregiving from Megan’s grandparents. She explained, “My mom [Tomiko Ito Ando] took care of my grandparents Mine and Gonsaku Ito back in the 1980’s, I am now taking care of my parents, and in 20 years, Megan might have to take care of me!”

Before Dorothy passed away, Diana and Megan’s family would visit her every Friday evening. “I think the most important thing was that we talked to her and listened to her stories,” Diana said. “It got her to think about her history, and we really got to know things about her life and the family.”

Diana and Megan highlighted how they try to give a sense of purpose through their caregiving interactions. Megan shared that she has “tea ceremony parties” with Tomiko. “Even though she has dementia, the practice is so deeply ingrained in her cultural upbringing that I think those memories came back to her.” The family likes to spend time in the kitchen with Tatsuo, whose hobby is cooking Japanese food, especially sushi, who has passed down his cooking knowledge to his children and grandchildren.

Diana shared about the importance of being prepared for the role of caregiving before stepping into it, as well as having a solid support system and doing self-care, which she learned through attending Keiro’s Caregiver Conferences in the past. Megan said she feels well prepared for the time when she might become a caregiver to her own parents.

Looking towards a future of continued caregiving, Megan shared, “The non-tangible things are the main things… To know that those lessons and stories and all the history [from my grandparents]—the good, bad, and ugly—have made us stronger as a family, that’s really what makes me happy and hopeful.”

For the full article, visit keiro.org/news.

Keiro Superstar: Yosh Arima

For 42 years, Yosh Arima, 91, was a teacher of a variety of subjects, counselor, and popular baseball, gymnastics, golf, and basketball coach at Belmont High School. He is most known for his love for sports and has taken several golf trips around the world.

In December 2019, Yosh was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. Since then, with the pandemic restrictions and his health, he has been limited from doing certain activities. In order to keep himself in good shape, Yosh eats healthy food, goes on mile-long walks every day, tends to his garden regularly, where he shares the produce with his family and friends, and, of course, golfs. Yosh shared that one of his main motivations for staying healthy is to be able to travel to Japan, Thailand, and Hawaii again.

Yosh continuously stresses the importance of being around people you enjoy. Yosh shared, “I am very blessed in my life, and the personal relationships I have with people have been very rewarding to me.”

For the full article, visit keiro.org/news.

Exploring Keiro’s Updated Resource Directory

By Heather Harada, MS, Director of Strategy

With all the information available to us online, it can seem like a daunting task to sort through it all and decide not only what our best options are but also what is reliable.

Keiro has long offered a resource guide for Our Community, presenting publicly available information and resources in a culturally relevant manner. We recently revamped the Resource Directory on our website, making it more user-friendly by adding filters to narrow your search and fact sheets that provide an overview of each category.

Keiro’s Resource Directory is a tool I have frequently utilized over the years, when assisting community members caring for loved ones or seeking options for themselves. I encourage everyone to try it!
Iyashi Care Story: A Support System Like No Other

Emi first learned of Iyashi Care at the end of January 2019 when her late husband Bill suddenly suffered heart failure. “I don’t speak English well and my husband doesn’t understand Japanese. I thought, ‘What am I going to do?’” She came across an advertisement in a Japanese newspaper where she saw the words “Japanese-speaking Iyashi Care team.” When she saw it, Emi “called immediately, thinking this may be a good place to ask for help.”

Heartful Support

As Bill’s primary caregiver, Emi shared that the support from the Iyashi Care team was a continuous source of reassurance. “Dr. Yanami talks to me more like a friend than a doctor, and I heard many people say, ‘I got cured when I saw that doctor’s face.’ I can ask and tell him anything, including saying things that I shouldn’t,” recalled Emi.

For Emi, the Iyashi Care team not only alleviates her health concerns, but also provides a powerful means of support for both her mental and physical wellbeing, providing ‘iyashi’ or healing.

Peace of Mind Knowing That You’re Supported, No Matter What

Emi also has a chronic illness herself. Sometimes, when she experiences nervousness, she has blood in her urine and has stomach pain that prevents her from eating properly. Because of these health concerns and her feelings of loneliness after becoming widowed, Emi decided to enroll herself in Iyashi Care after Bill’s death.

For the full article, visit keiro.org/news.
SENIOR SAFETY TIPS

1. Be aware of your surroundings.
   Limit distractions, such as phone use.

2. Walk in groups while conducting errands.

3. Speak out in a loud and firm voice if you are being followed or threatened.

4. Seek help immediately. Ask others to call 9-1-1 if assistance is needed.

5. Report the incident to someone you trust.
   Report any anti-Asian incident you experience or witness (even if it is not a crime) to stopaapihate.org.

These tips are provided in partnership with Keiro and Little Tokyo Service Center.

For more information: keiro.org/senior-safety
日本語はこちら: keiro.org/jp/senior-safety