

Carers need time out

This year, Carers Week is being celebrated from 18 - 24 October. However, for the carers themselves, their role is not time limited.

'Carers are people who provide informal assistance to someone to help them remain living in the community - an older person, someone with a disability or long-term health condition. Some people may not even realise they are a 'carer' – it's just something they do', explains Sue McKechnie, Resthaven Executive Manager, Community Services.

'Caring for someone at home can be tiring, stressful and sometimes overwhelming. Family carers focus on the needs of the person they care for, but often don't recognise their own needs. It is very important that they have a break themselves sometimes, as social activities and outings are important for good health and well-being, and reduce the risk of depression.'

'Everyone needs a break from their caring role from time to time. However, carers are often so involved in day to day tasks, that knowing where to go for help when it is needed is a major impediment.'

'Resthaven has a variety of programs that assist older people and their carers,' Sue explained. 'Enjoyable activities are offered for the person cared for, in their own home or as an outing. This allows carers the peace of mind to take care of their own needs, get out and about, catch up with friends and participating in activities they enjoy.'

'As well as in-home one to one respite care, we have extended hours community respite services that give carers the opportunity to have an extended break from their caring role. These include centre based services at Marion, operating from 8 am – 8 pm, an overnight respite service during week days at Westbourne Park and Naracoorte, and in the western suburbs, respite for working carers, to help people keep their jobs when they have caring responsibilities.'

'Another option to consider is respite accommodation in a residential care facility. Resthaven has a number of places which are permanently reserved to provide respite for people who require short term care. Short term respite is offered at Resthaven's nine locations: Bellevue Heights, Craigmore, Leabrook, Malvern, Marion, Mitcham, Murray Bridge, Paradise and Westbourne Park.'

'The period of respite care may vary, up to a maximum of 63 days per person within a financial year. Applicants require an assessment from the government Aged Care Assessment Team. Resthaven's Admissions staff can assist with residential respite inquiries – phone 8373 9123.'

' Last year, nearly 7000 South Australians benefited from Resthaven's range of in-home care and support services and self management programs for older people and their carers.'

For information about the range of services available, visit www.resthaven.asn.au or phone 1300 136 633.

Fact file:

In 2003, there were 2.5 million carers aged 15 years and over in Australia. This represents 16 % of the population, indicating the critical role these peopel play in the fabric of Australian society. With a median age 48 years, 34% of primary carers felt weary or lacking in energy. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics *A Profile of Carers in Australia 2008*)

Ends./

Photo: Enjoying some time out in the library at Resthaven Craigmore – From left: Mary Drake, Margaret Miller and Personal Care Assistant James Boczan.

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