

CREATIVE CAREGIVING

For eight years, Mrs. Janis Opferman has been the primary caregiver to her husband, Joseph, a Marine Corps Veteran. The past four years he has required 24/7 care as his dementia worsened. “He’s taken care of me and our family all these years. It’s my time to take care of him,” she said.

Creativity helps Janis. For instance, Joseph used to get into all his clothes putting three or four shirts on at a time (something normal for someone with dementia). It was stressful for Janis, and agitating for Joseph. The solution? A table in front of the clothing dresser filled with things he likes, such

as magazines and an old cell phone. Janis calls it his “activity table.” “It worked out very well. Instead of getting into his clothes, now he looks at the table and carries those items around our home. It took my stress away and helped us.”

With it getting dark early in the winter, Janis also decided to try leaving all the lights on in the house later to make it “daylight” longer for her husband. This creative and simple solution keeps him calm, and also stops him from going to bed too early. It’s not just creativity though – being a 24/7 caregiver requires significant patience and understanding. “Dementia is a hard thing

to watch. Patience, love, and care are needed. It also helps to think of all the good times,” said Janis.

Support from VA Butler Healthcare helps too. Janis utilizes in-home respite care, Home-Based Primary Care, and the Health Buddy System. She also talks frequently with her husband’s health care team and VA Butler’s Caregiver Support Coordinator. For Janis, the most helpful aspect of VA’s Caregiver Support program is having someone to talk to. “It’s a good feeling being able to pick up the phone and call to chat.”

VA Butler’s Caregiver Support Coordinator provides support by matching caregivers with services they are eligible



for, and providing them with valuable information about resources that can help them stay smart, strong, and organized as they care for their Veteran. Have questions about VA Caregiver Support Services? Contact VA Butler’s Caregiver Support Coordinator at 800.362.8262 Ext. 2492, or call VA’s Caregiver Support Line 1.855.260.3274.

“It’s a good feeling being able to pick up the phone and call to chat.”
 —Janis Opferman, Caregiver for Joseph Opferman, Marine Corps Veteran

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY...JANUARY

- 6 The U.S. Navy orders the sale of 125 flying boats to encourage commercial aviation (1921)
- 11 The U.S. Surgeon General declares cigarettes may be hazardous to health, the first such official government report [Quit smoking! VA can help: 1-855-QUIT-VET] (1964)
- 15 The King Center sponsors the first annual observance of Dr. King’s birthday and calls for nationwide commemorations of Dr. King’s birthday [This observance becomes the model for subsequent annual commemorations of Dr. King’s birthday nationwide] (1969)
- 28 The U.S. Coast Guard is founded to fight contraband trade and aid distressed vessels at sea (1915)
- 30 Tet Offensive in Vietnam begins (1968)



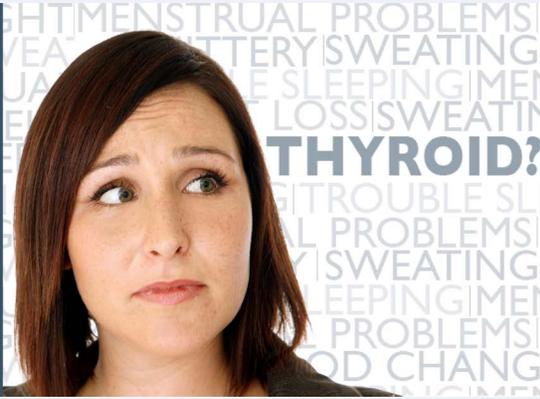
CAREGIVERS: START 2015 WITH SELF-CARE!

Caregivers for Veterans: Start 2015 off right with some self-care. Find out more about VA’s Respite Care, a solution to give you a break from caregiving at www.va.gov/geriatrics/guide/longtermcare/Respite_Care.asp.

JANUARY IS NATIONAL THYROID AWARENESS MONTH

Is it stress,
or is it
your thyroid?

Get your
thyroid checked.
Let VA help.



Have you been feeling tired, gaining weight, or feeling depressed? Have you been losing weight without trying to, feeling jittery, and having trouble sleeping? These types of symptoms can be caused by many different things, including thyroid conditions. The thyroid is a gland in your neck that controls your body's rate of metabolism. Women are up to five times more likely than men to have a thyroid condition.

January is National Thyroid Awareness Month, and VA Butler Healthcare wants to make you aware of thyroid conditions – how they can affect your health and when to ask your VA provider about getting a thyroid check. Thyroid conditions are very common among women. Learn more here: www.womenshealth.va.gov.

HAPPY NEW YEAR! RESOLVE TO HELP VETERANS IN 2015

This new year, resolve to help Veterans in your life find support if they need it through the Veterans Crisis Line. The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans and Service members in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders through a toll-free hotline, online chat, or text-messaging service. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1.800.273.8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or send a text message to 838255 to get confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Since launching in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 1.25 million calls and made more than 39,000 lifesaving rescues.

If a Veteran or Service member you know is showing signs of crisis — such as hopelessness, anxiety, or withdrawal — one conversation can open the door to support. Spread the word about the Veterans Crisis Line, where confidential resources are just one call, chat, or text away. Visit VeteransCrisisLine.net/SpreadTheWord to find out how you can help.



WINTER WOMEN'S WELLNESS

VA Butler's Women's Health & Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Programs are pleased to invite all women Veterans to the second annual Winter Women's Wellness Event on Friday, February 6, from 3-5:30pm in VA Butler's Auditorium. Join us to learn more about VA programs and services, and enjoy an afternoon of relaxation and wellness! All attendees are encouraged to wear red for National Wear Red Day® — a special day to bring attention to the number one killer of women, heart disease.

Please RSVP by Friday, January 30, 2015 to the Women Veteran's Program Manager at 724.285.2756.

We want to hear from you! Email amanda.kurtz2@va.gov to share your story with us!

EVENTS

Annual Healthy Living Food Drive

Non-perishable and non-expired food items only

1= January 1-31

3= All donations benefit local Veterans in need. Contact 724.285.2771 or 724.487.1694 for more details.

*Reminder! The *new* Recovery Group Program "Veteran X" is every Monday from 6-8pm at VA Butler Healthcare. Learn more: www.butler.va.gov/services/Behavioral_Health.asp*



800.362.8262
724.287.4781

www.butler.va.gov



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