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## Caregiver Champions program offers resources, expertise on various topics

By yourmonroeville

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St. Bernadette Catholic Church in Monroeville is hosting a new program for caregivers.

Caregiver Champions, sponsored by the **Jewish Healthcare Foundation**, will hold five two-hour learning circle sessions at the parish beginning June 8 at 6 p.m.

In the learning circles, caregivers can share experiences, learn about existing resources and hear from other caregivers and guest speakers about topics such as safety, organization, health and planning.

Each session will feature a topic expert to present information to the group.

Those who attend the sessions will be reimbursed for respite care fees during their participation.

"It's different than a support group," says Nancy Zionts, chief program officer at the Jewish Healthcare Foundation. "This also was intended for people to leave with additional information.

"We believe information is power and strength. There are so many resources for people who are having a baby, but we don't do that for caregivers who are, in many cases, thrust into very difficult situations for which there is no real road map."

Church parishioner Roseann Martino has been a caregiver for 10 years. She has been working with the program and said she thought it would be a good addition to the church.

"I was always really interested in trying to find a way to help caregivers," she said. "I love the idea because I know I struggled for a long time trying to find a lot of this information as a caregiver."

Kathy Klocek, pastoral associate at the church, agreed.

"This program offers a whole lot of resources that it would take someone a long time to try and accumulate," she said.

"Monroeville is getting a bit older," she said. "We have parishioners who have to care for spouses and aging parents. We have a senior adult ministry, and we've been trying to find ways to support these caregivers. I just thought, 'Oh my. This is perfect.'

"It talks so much about what caregivers go through, and I thought it was something that fit in with some of the goals we were trying to deal with."

She anticipates the program will be beneficial to those who attend.

"Hopefully, they'll be able to become better caregivers because they'll have everything that they need to do a really good job for their loved ones."

Zionts says she hopes the program, which is in its first year, continues to grow.

"If we look forward two to three years from now, we've love to have 30 and 40 sessions running at a time," she said. "That's just our hope. We'll see what we can do."

<http://www.yourmonroeville.com/timesexpress/article/caregiver-champions-program-offers-resources-expertise-various-topics-0>