



Taking Care of the Caregivers

According to a study by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, 44.4 million caregivers in the U.S. (21% of the adult population) provide unpaid care to an adult family member or friend. These devoted families, friends and neighbors volunteer more than rides, meals, housekeeping and childcare. They often sacrifice their own health needs, and can become prone to stress-related illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and depression. Caregivers can also struggle emotionally as they care for their loved ones, while balancing the financial implications of missed time at work and the physical implications of being overscheduled.



When sudden or chronic illness strikes, a real sense of community can develop to support the patient and his or her caregivers. Still, it's often difficult for patients and family caregivers to ask for help, and when help is offered, managing it can be a challenge. Coordinating family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and church or synagogue members can be complex and time-consuming, with endless phone tag, too much food delivered, and forgotten commitments.

A new online service called Lotsa Helping Hands (www.lotsahelpinghands.com) was created with caregivers in mind, to provide free-of-charge a platform for coordinating volunteer caregiving. Its founders had similar experiences caring for loved ones and soon realized that their experience in building global internet software companies could nurture a new form of social networking. This unique concept harnesses the power of online social communities to organize the family's 'circles of community'—to more efficiently accomplish what previously seemed so daunting, and to rekindle or discover the strength of participating in community action.

Lotsa Helping Hands is a simple, immediate way for friends, family, colleagues and neighbors to help loved ones in need. Its easy-to-use private group calendar organizes help such as meals delivery, rides and other tasks that can be challenging to manage during times of medical crisis, end-of-life caring, or family caregiver exhaustion. It is also a place to securely share vital medical, legal, or financial information with designated family members while keeping these 'circles of community' informed with status updates, photo galleries, and message boards.

To date, more than 8,000 Lotsa Helping Hands communities have been created around the world. More than 50 of the most respected health-related organizations such as the ALS Association, Alzheimer's Association, American Lung Association, Brain Tumor Society, Lance Armstrong Foundation, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, National Ovarian Cancer Coalition and National Stroke Association have partnered with Lotsa Helping Hands and co-branded the service to provide their constituents with access to this important tool. More than 400,000 tasks have been posted, proving there is an easy and efficient way to help care for our patients and our family caregivers.

For additional information, please visit www.lotsahelpinghands.com.