

HART provides personalized, compassionate care at home

**GUEST EDITORIAL
BY PATRICIA E. BERGGREN**

Chairperson, Board of Directors
HART Inc.

The recent passing of former first lady Rosalynn Carter reminded all of us of her lifelong role as a champion for those who devote their lives to caring for others.

At a 1987 event, she spoke these famous words: "There are only four kinds of people in the world – those that have been caregivers, those that are caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers."

For over 40 years, HART (Home Assistance Referral Team) has also been a champion of the importance of caregivers in our lives by providing personalized and compassionate care in the homes of those requesting our assistance. Our free referral service connects seniors and others with qualified care, allowing them to remain independent and safe in their own homes. HART also provides respite care for families caring for loved ones who simply "need a break."

Whether it is a senior asking for companionship, or a full-time 24/7 case requiring health care assistance, HART's caregivers range from home helpers to registered nurses ... all of whom have been fully vetted with background checks.

The care model provided by HART is unique and personalized for every case. The requestor or a family member interviews caregivers matching their needs and they make a choice. That caregiver or team, if needed, will remain with the person throughout their case.

The requestor and their family



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have the comfort of knowing that the assigned caregiver will be a constant in their home, thus providing safety and a sense of familiarity. This is especially important for those suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's disease. The caregiver is often referred to as a "member of our family" ... helping to allow their loved one to retain a sense of dignity and identity.

Much has been written about the value of helping vulnerable seniors and those with special needs to "age in place." The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines aging in place as: "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age, income or ability level."

Today, someone turning 65 has almost a 70% chance of needing some type of long-term care services and support in their remaining years, according to the U.S. Administration for Community Living.

These statistics are having a direct impact on HART's operation. While mainly serving communities in Niagara County for many years, we are now seeing

a dramatic increase in requests from the Greater Niagara community including areas in Erie County. The COVID pandemic has seen our cases skyrocket, as families seek care for loved ones in the safety of their own home. Thankfully, our roster of caregivers has grown considerably to meet this need.

HART continues to be most proud of our service to those entrusted to our care, and this growth only emphasizes the need for us to remain viable. We are a not-for-profit organization that does not charge those in need for referral services. To that end, we have been most fortunate to operate solely on the generous donations of individuals, businesses, grants and community events.

Our board of directors realizes, however, the need to dramatically increase charitable support in order to serve increased requests. During the month of February, we will initiate a community appeal primarily through print and social media.

If you have received home care from HART for a family member, passed our information along to a friend, or simply realize that one day you may need us ... please consider a gift to HART, or include us in your estate planning. We promise to be here for you well into the future – and hope you will be there for us as we continue to grow.

For information about our services, to become a caregiver or to make a donation, please contact HART at 716-754-8313 or go to our website at www.hartprogram.org. You can also check us out on Facebook.

HART offices are located at 505 Cayuga St., Lewiston.

Niagara County showing higher rates of respiratory illness, lower rates of vaccination

Niagara County Department of Health hosting free vaccination clinic

Submitted by the Niagara County Department of Health

The Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH) is urging residents to stay informed and take proactive measures against respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19, flu and RSV. The current situation poses a significant threat to public health, with data indicating elevated rates of hospitalizations and a strain on health care systems both locally and nationwide.

Our community experiences longer wait times in medical offices, urgent care centers and emergency departments, decreased availability of hospital beds for pediatric patients, and adults who are more acutely ill, increased number of respiratory illness outbreaks in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and hospitals, longer patient stays, increased rates of health care-associated infections, and poorer outcomes including excess deaths.

Key points:

✓ According to the CDC, rates of COVID-19- and influenza-associated hospitalizations remain elevated throughout most of the country. The rapid



increase in COVID-19-associated hospitalizations has slowed, and influenza-associated hospitalizations declined in the past week. Hospitalization rates for RSV remain elevated.

✓ Deaths attributed to respiratory illness in the U.S. represent 4.5% of all deaths. The percent of deaths associated with COVID-19 and influenza increased compared to the previous weeks, while RSV deaths remained stable. COVID-19 continues to cause a larger number of hospitalizations and deaths than flu

and RSV combined.

✓ Trends in flu data in Niagara County follow those observed across the state, with a total of 550 flu cases reported as of week ending Jan. 6. In Niagara County, the percent of cases in adults aged 18-49 years has been increasing, accounting for 33% of all new cases for the week ending Jan. 6.

✓ The current rate of hospitalization for adults aged 18-49 statewide is 19%, contributing to an excess strain on the health **SEE NIAGARA, continued on Page 8**

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