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**Thrive Alliance Caregiver Services Mission Statement:**  
*Helping caregivers through their journey one step at a time.*

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## **And Today I'm a Caregiver...**

I'd never really planned to wake up as a caregiver to my parents in their mid-eighties. And neither had they! The thing is, everyone has their life planned out and, in the back of my mind, I knew that, way down the road, my parents might need a little help. It started out with just picking them up and taking them on little road trips with my sisters and occasionally helping them get a few groceries or helping out in their yard.

Then the call came, "Your Dad's had an aneurysm and is being rushed to the hospital." Scary as all get out - because Dad was one of those men, just like your husband or Dad, who was strong, independent and had every minute of every day planned out. Obviously, he'd missed this memo from God. That's been so long ago, maybe eight or nine years, that much of his recovery is now a blur. It did become clear, though, that we were going to have to make some changes.

Dad's personality began to change and he became much more demanding of Mom, (well, really, everyone who happened to be in close proximity to him!) which wore her down quickly. They live on an 80-acre spread and wanted to have everything immaculate. This was a challenge for his kids, and after many attempts to keep up with our lives and his, it became nearly impossible for everyone.

Dad ended up having a stroke and eventually my parents had to enter assisted living. This meant weekly trips, an hour away, after work or on weekends, just trying to keep up with their personal errands, laundry and providing meaningful distractions with their new living arrangements. Going from a two-story house on 80 acres to a two-bedroom apartment in town was tough on dad!

And of course, the facility didn't have "home cooking" so on many visits, Dad wanted to head out to his favorite restaurants. Both parents are now on walkers and it's just me, but folks are genuinely kind, and made getting in and out of Dad's favorite eateries a lot easier.

Choices are s-o-o-o important when life wakes you up to tell you that you're no longer the young and fit fellow you used to be! I remember on one of our trips, I'm driving him and mom to "you know, that chicken joint where you can eat all you want." Turns out while I'm driving and looking for it (it's not even in the town we're driving through!), all the traffic in front of me decides to stop for a red light. But not us, cause I'm looking for a restaurant that's 20 miles away! Yes, you guessed it, I crashed into the car in front of me. I chuckle now as I recall Dad saying "O Betty! She's killed us!"

Some months later, my parents end up in a new assisted living home, Dad as demanding of Mom as ever. Being a long-distance caregiver, working full time, we'd have nightly conversations trying to make the evenings a little easier for him. We'd just hung up for the night when he calls me back to say "Your mom's run away!" Mom had, in fact, taken her walker and scooted herself away from their assisted living facility and no one knew where to find her. Long-story-short, she was found a few blocks away, on the sidewalk...she was walking home! (you know, three miles away!) So that brought a new frustration, because now Mom had to wear a monitor ankle bracelet to remind her that she was "locked in."

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# And Today I'm a Caregiver...

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Dad ended up having a fall that he didn't recover from and Mom now lives in a third facility, a nursing home. Nice as it is, she not only misses her home, but also the love of her life. She now has dementia. She does know me and we have the same conversations over and over with each visit. I'm thankful that my previous background in long-term care equipped me to be happy to have those repetitive conversations with her and to focus on the fact that she still knows me. She always tells me I'm beautiful, as mothers do!


Lately, and with the help of Powerful Tools for Caregivers, I've learned to focus on the positive interactions with Mom. I reminded myself that whether I'm there every day or once a week, to Mom it's just about the moment we're sharing. I really encourage others who might feel frustrated that they can't be everywhere and everything to their care receiver, to say the "thank you" that your care receiver would say to you if they weren't in their situation.

**Karen Brock** has served as the Family Service Adviser with Meredith - Clark Funeral Home in Morgantown since 2011. Having first met the Meredith Family in 1977 when she was employed as a long-term care administrator, it was a natural transition 40 years later to join their team of caring professionals. "Giving back to the communities we serve is important to all of us here at the funeral home. Being a volunteer with Thrive Alliance for their Powerful Tools For Caregivers since 2019 has truly enriched my life."

## Do you have an email address?

Want to receive your newsletters electronically? Please submit your email address to me for future correspondence! We also have a Thrive Alliance Caregiver Resources Facebook group. Email me if you would like to be a part of the group. You can email me at [jferri@thrive-alliance.org](mailto:jferri@thrive-alliance.org)

### Valentine's Day Word Search



m i a n z      t c v u o  
m f y l r o s e s y a a c m c  
j v l r e h f q v d m r m s g u h  
h t o a c m e f n z g i f t s v s  
o s w u u r f a j d y n r e t s u  
x j e r p s c y r n e g v l e s k  
g r b i d p p v t n o a n k n  
s e d r k i s s l e d k i  
f v a l e n t i n e p  
c n i f b i g  
f g b k d  
x f e  
r

love	candy	caring	hugs
cupid	cards	February	pink
valentine	flowers	red	gifts
heart	kindness	kiss	roses





February is American Heart Month, a time that we can all focus on our cardiovascular health. High blood pressure is often called the silent killer. You might not have symptoms, but it is a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Regularly monitoring your blood pressure, with support from your healthcare team, can help lower your risk for heart disease and stroke. You can check your blood pressure at the doctor's office, pharmacy, or even in your home!

Here are seven strategies that you can work to adopt today to help decrease your chance of cardiovascular disease and live a heart healthy life!

- Learn your health history: Know your risks and talk with your healthcare team about your history and risk factors.
- Eat a healthy diet: Make more healthy food choices like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products. Focus on eating less salt, saturated fat, and added sugar.
- Stay active: Incorporate at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week, and muscle-strengthening activities at least 2 days a week.
- Quit smoking: Start your quit plan today! Take the first step and call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for FREE support.
- Take your medications as prescribed: If you take any medications, follow your doctor's instructions carefully. Always ask questions if you do not understand something. Never stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.
- Rethink your drink: Substitute water for sugary drinks to reduce calories. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.
- Monitor your blood pressure: You can check your blood pressure at the doctor's office, pharmacy, and in your home with the use of self-measured blood pressure monitors.

## Ingredients

1 pound chicken breasts, boneless, skinless, cut into thin strips  
2 teaspoons olive oil  
1 large yellow onion, finely chopped  
1 medium green pepper, finely chopped  
1 medium red pepper, finely chopped  
3 cloves garlic, mashed  
1/3 cup no-salt-added tomato sauce  
1/3 cup low-sodium chicken broth  
1/3 cup fresh lemon juice  
1/3 cup water  
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin  
2 bay leaves  
1/4 cup golden raisins  
fresh cilantro leaves  
1 tablespoon capers, drained  
2 tablespoons green olives chopped

## chickadillo (chicken picadillo)

1. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion, peppers, and garlic, and sauté until the vegetables are soft, about 5 minutes.
2. Add the chicken and stirfry for another 5 to 10 minutes, until the chicken has cooked through.
3. Add the tomato sauce, chicken broth, lemon juice, cumin, bay leaves, water, and raisins to the vegetables and chicken.
4. Cover the pan and reduce the heat. Simmer for 10 minutes or until the chicken is tender.
5. Remove the bay leaves and serve with brown rice and black beans. Garnish with fresh cilantro, capers, and olives.

**Yield** 6 servings, **Serving Size** 3/4 cup, **Calories** 162, **Total Fat** 5g, **Saturated Fat** 1g, **Cholesterol** 46mg, **Sodium** 133mg, **Total Fiber** 2g, **Protein** 18g, **Carbohydrates** 13g, **Potassium** 380mg

