

National Home Caregiver Recognition Month

November was designated as National Home Caregiver Recognition Month. As always, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is a step ahead. Residents in all sixty-seven counties in Alabama, including Bibb, have been offered the opportunity to receive home caregiver training.

“There are four kinds of people in this world: those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who need caregivers”---Rosalynn Carter, former First Lady.

Truer words were never spoken. From April 24 through September 30, over four hundred citizens in Autauga, Bibb, Butler, Chilton, Dallas, Lowndes, and Wilcox Counties attended conferences to learn how to become better caregivers. The program here in Bibb County took place at Bibb Medical Center in Centreville.

The audiences consisted of home caregivers, medical and social work professionals, nursing students from junior colleges and their instructors, and high school students from career academies, including a class from the Bibb County Career Academy that attended the training in Centreville.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System Family and Consumer Sciences team for Bibb County includes Valerie Conner, Regional Extension Agent (REA) for Human Diet and Nutrition; Sharon Gilbert, REA for Personal Financial Management; Janice Hall, REA for Food Safety, Preservation and Preparation, and Sallie Lide-Hooker REA for Family and Child Development.

All of these REAs collaborated with numerous agencies and community partners to provide the two-day conference in each county. Participants received continuing education units from the State of Alabama Nurses Board and the State Board of Social Work Examiners. Contact hours were provided for participants not needing CEUs. Door prizes were also awarded daily and participants enjoyed snacks and lunches provided by ACES and other sponsors.

Among the topics covered were Home Caregiving, Aging, Communication, Body Mechanics, Personal Care, Health Monitoring Skills, Nutrition, Food safety, Home Maintenance, Time and Stress Management, Keeping Records, Disaster Planning, Starting a Home Care Business, Respite Care, Medicare Eligibility, Legal Issues, Hospice Availability, and others.

A Virtual Dementia Tour was considered by many to be the highlight of the conference. Those experiencing the tour “will never be the same.” For the majority, their feelings after the tour gave them a much greater understanding of how dementia patients feel and how frustrated they are because of their inability to do ordinary, daily tasks.

Evaluations by the participants were very positive. “My students mention the conference on a daily basis, and based on comments from our high school seniors who participated, the juniors are already looking forward to attending next year,” said Wanda Mount, Health Occupations Instructor at Bibb County Career Academy.

Finally, ACES is developing a Home Caregivers network of the 2009 participants who successfully completed the two day course, passed a background check and wish to be included on a resource website. The network and website will be excellent resources that will help families locate trained caregivers for their loved ones.