



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Help is here: New program offers charitable support for caregivers

Markham, ON – Did you know that approximately one in five Canadians is a caregiver? Today an increasing number of caregivers are struggling to balance the demands of caring for a loved one at home, with their work, life and family responsibilities.

Imagine if your early morning routine involved assisting an elderly parent with their toilet, bathing and grooming needs before waking the kids, getting ready for work, cooking breakfast, packing lunches and getting yourself and your children out the door by 8:30 a.m.?

Your day has just started and you're already feeling exhausted, frustrated and stressed out. What's more, you can't even remember the last time you did something for yourself.

According to Shirlee Sharkey, President and CEO of Saint Elizabeth Health Care, this scenario reflects some of the real-life challenges that many caregivers deal with on a daily basis. "Whether they're caring for an elderly parent, a chronically ill friend, or a child with special needs, we're seeing more and more caregivers who need help to remain productive and healthy members of our communities and workforces," says Sharkey.

Huron and Northumberland Counties have been selected as pilot sites for a new respite program for caregivers, developed and launched under the leadership of the Saint Elizabeth Health Care Foundation.

The Saint Elizabeth Health Care Foundation was incorporated in 1995 to raise charitable support for the enhancement and expansion of home health care in Canada.

This charitable program will deliver innovative, professional and high quality respite care, free of charge, to families who have exhausted all their available options and are still in need of temporary relief from their caregiving responsibilities. It will also provide a forum for the delivery of education and training to help caregivers.

In addition, the program will facilitate research opportunities to measure and evaluate caregiver satisfaction and enhancements to quality of life. This information will contribute to the future development of training seminars and support groups, based on identified needs.

With a Vision to be a phenomenal knowledge and care exchange company, Saint Elizabeth Health Care is a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization that has been caring for communities since 1908. Saint Elizabeth Health Care will be accepting referrals from caregivers, family members, friends or health care providers.

Sharkey states: "We're exploring a number of ways to support and empower caregivers, whether it's through information, education, advice, or actual respite services. Call us. We're here to be helpful."

For more information about the respite program for family caregivers, please contact Madonna Tonack at (905) 940-9655 ext. 2269.

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90 Allstate Parkway, Suite 300, Markham, Ontario L3R 6H3 Tel: 905.940.9655 Fax: 905.940.9934 Web: www.saintelizabeth.com





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Some alarming caregiving statistics:

- Currently, 40% of people over the age of 30 are providing home care to one or more family members
- 80% of eldercare is provided by family caregivers
- 58% of family caregivers suffer from poor physical and emotional health
- 55% of employed family caregivers report repercussions at work
- Employed family caregivers cost employers \$4,500 per employee, per year