

News Release



Southwestern Bell
Telephone

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Southwestern Bell Telephone lends support, training to caregivers

(ST. LOUIS, Mo.) Caregivers--adult children caring for aged parents--are quickly becoming society's newest subgroup. They are also the most harried, often dividing their time between work and two generations of family.

Now, caregivers are being given some care of their own. Southwestern Bell Telephone Company (SWBT) today announced a program to heighten awareness of caregiving and offer practical advice to professionals, community organizations and employers that interact with caregivers. Those organizations will be provided with tools to aid caregivers.

"Caregiving: The Challenge of Elder Care," is a program underwritten and produced by Southwestern Bell Telephone. It was developed with the guidance of older adult advocacy groups such as the National Council on The Aging.

Senator Robert Dole (R-Kansas) was among those attending last week's premiere presentation of the Southwestern Bell Telephone caregiving program in Washington, D.C.

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Dole called the new program an example of how effective American business can be in responding to the needs of an important segment of our nation's people.

The emergence of caregiving as a social issue grew out of an increase in population of adults age 65 or older. Twelve percent (29 million) of the United States population is in that age group. By the year 2030, the over 65 population is expected to swell to 21 percent (65 million).

Meanwhile, the number of children to care for older adults is expected to decrease 4.7 percent by the year 2000, leaving fewer people to eventually care for older family members.

Most caregivers are women and nearly half of them work full-time. Often the caregiver falls into the role without training or experience.

Southwestern Bell Telephone's program intends to lend a hand to those caregivers. It includes a 28-minute video documentary entitled "We're Not Alone." The documentary, narrated by actress Colleen Dewhurst, will be made available to PBS, cable and syndicated television for fall 1987 broadcast.

In the videotape, profiles of caregivers are presented, and information is provided by experts in the field of care for the aging. The documentary offers information on resources, such as adult day care, available to caregivers.

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Other components of the program are a manual and an audiotape. The manual is divided into three parts and provides resource information for health care professionals; community groups, churches or synagogues; and employers of caregivers in the workplace.

The audiotape, entitled "I Care," is geared to the caregiver. A cassette tape is an extremely practical medium for the caregiver, since he or she has so little spare time, according to Royce S. Caldwell, SWBT vice president-personnel.

"Typically, the caregiver is a working woman who is constantly rushing from one commitment to another," Caldwell said. "Trying to juggle a home and family with full-time employment is difficult enough. Just imagine adding the challenge of caring for an aging family member.

"Since the caregiver's time is so precious, the audiotape can be plugged into the tape player in the car while the caregiver is on the go. Or she can listen to parts of the tape during her few spare moments alone."

Many of Southwestern Bell Telephone's own employees may be caregivers, Caldwell said.

"We realize that employees must devote time and energy in their roles as caregivers," he said. "In fact, as many as 25 percent of Southwestern Bell Telephone employees may be caring for elderly relatives. By offering this program, we hope to assist those employees and ease their burden."

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Southwestern Bell Telephone's decision to assist caregivers comes at a crucial time, according to Jack Ossofsky, president of the National Council on The Aging.

"With the ever-increasing population over age 65, adult children of older parents find themselves more and more in the position of caregiver," Ossofsky said. "Many mid-life women are caught between careers and caregiving."

"Working caregivers are often isolated and unaware of community resources available to them," he said. "This program provides a role for community organizations to fill needs such as creation of support groups and at the same time informing caregivers of resources available."

For more information on how to obtain copies of the videotape, audiotape and manual, write: "Caregiving: The Challenge of Elder Care," 7 Nowell Farme Rd., Carlisle, MA 01741 or call 617-371-0518.

The caregiving project is the latest in a series of efforts by Southwestern Bell Telephone to reach out to key customer groups. Previous projects include the video documentaries "Making the Right Moves: Blacks in Corporate America" and "Hispanic Dropouts: America's Time Bomb." Both programs have appeared on public and commercial television and feature support materials.

Southwestern Bell Telephone is a wholly owned subsidiary of Southwestern Bell Corporation and provides network exchange service to nearly 9 million customers in Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and Missouri.

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