

My husband, Greg and I have been caring for my mother since 2002, after she suffered a stroke. We have three children, Abrah, Rees and Marah, ages 13, 10 and 7. Our youngest was nine months old when my mother came from Maine to Rhode Island in order to live with us. My mother has always been afraid to be in a nursing home situation, which is why my family and I love that she can be a part of our home. After the stroke my mother was left with a right side weakness. Today that weakness has worsened. She is also experiencing some memory challenges which make it difficult for us to leave her unattended for more than three or four hours at a time. We have had to move three different times with my husband's job and each time my mother was able to have her own space: a small apartment or an in-law suite in our home. We have found that it is very important when two families come together for each to have their own space.

With my mother's care comes a lot of planning. We have to be sure we have continuous, coverage help-wise as well as meal-wise. There are also many phone calls to make, such as following up on appointments, etc. I also need to administer her 30 different daily medications. To help with this, we have invented a placemat that I would encourage others to use. This placemat has pictures of each of her pills on it. She has a morning mat as well as an evening mat; and, I can use these to check the pills I have put into her daily pill strips. By matching the pills to their pictures, I am assured that she is receiving the proper medications at the proper time. This is also a help to others that may be with my mother at pill time, if we are not there.

I have been cyber schooling our children for 3 years, Cyber school is working on school at home with teachers, through a public school, by using computers. Between school, the children's activities, household jobs (such as laundry and cleaning) meal preparation, helping with my mother's showers, incontinence challenges, appointments and medications, as well as helping with the Jr. Church and nursery programs at the church where we attend, I can be pulled in various directions.

Home Instead Senior Care here in Lewisburg, PA has been a great asset to our situation. They help with my mother's transportation to doctors' appointments, hair salons and various other errands. They have also been able to sit with my mother, when we are going to be away from the house for an extended period of time. Our latest challenge was to convince my mother to go to Bingo once a week so that she would be able to interact with ladies in her own age group. Home Instead helped me to orchestrate all of that and have encouraged my mother to participate (we are all still encouraging her). The caregivers at Home Instead have been very helpful and professional while working with my mother and our family.

At times, I feel guilty that I am not able to sit with my mother and visit more, but with all that young children and caregiving entails, I am not able to do that as much as I would like. I know we are obviously with her more than we would ever be able to, if she were in a nursing home. Even if I am dashing by her door, she knows I am there.

I would like to nominate our family as “Caregivers of the Year”. My husband and our children have each shared me, and my attention for almost 7 years. Without my husband’s support and the children’s support, I would not be able to do all that I do. We would not be able to help my mother as we do.

I encourage others to care for their aging parents. It is hard to see our parents changing. The role reversal is especially difficult. I try (as I remind our children) to remember that although my mother may seem different on the outside, she is the same on the inside as she has always been. She has feelings, worries and concerns, as we all do. Through this experience, I know our children are learning the valuable lesson of compassion and the importance of family members taking care of one another. I am grateful we can experience these challenges together.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our situation.

Sincerely,

Bette Scott