



## spotlight on health care

### Book Calls For More Care For Family Caregivers

(NAPSA)—A new book may offer family caregivers some well-deserved recognition and support. According to experts, more than 25 million Americans spend 20 hours or more each week caring for a loved one who is disabled, frail, or suffering from a chronic condition.

Caregiving is also a social and economic issue of concern to policy makers and insurers alike. The value of these family caregivers' services is estimated at \$257 billion a year—more than twice what is spent on nursing home and paid home care nationally.

Now a new book, *Love, Honor, & Value* (Capital Books, \$14.95), argues that caregivers should be recognized for their contribution to the health care system, and protected against the physical, emotional and financial complications that often accompany caregiving.

Author Suzanne Mintz speaks with the authority of experience: she has cared for her progressively ailing husband for nearly three decades. In 1993 she co-founded the National Family Caregivers Association (NFCA) with friend and fellow family caregiver Cindy Fowler.

Mintz makes the case that family caregiving is a public good as vital as firefighting or policing the streets. Approximately 80 percent of all home care services in this country are provided by family caregivers. Said Mintz, "If you haven't walked in a family caregiver's shoes, you can never fully understand the emotional and physical stress, the financial burden and the isolation that comes with providing care for an ill or

#### Doing Your Best for Your Loved Ones and Yourself

- 1 Be proactive—ask questions, gather information, trust your instincts.
- 2 Get help—In whatever way you can; from family or friends, through service agencies or your faith community.
- 3 Take care of yourself—so you have the physical and emotional energy to take care of him/her.



disabled loved one. Some of us are on duty 24 hours a day."

She also demonstrates how family caregivers put their lives on the line to provide quality care to people they love. For instance, research has found that family caregivers can take longer to heal than non-caregivers, due to the effects of stress. Other studies have shown that family caregivers who help with personal care activities are more likely to suffer depression, sleeplessness, and backaches.

Among the changes Mintz argues for are:

- Create a national network of easily accessible and affordable respite services to allow family caregivers a break from their duties.
- Ease the economic burdens of caregiving families through a meaningful tax credit.
- Better coverage of the costs of chronic care.

Copies are available by calling NFCA at 1-800-896-3650, or online at [www.nfca cares.org](http://www.nfca cares.org). The book may also be purchased at online and retail bookstores nationwide.