

## Speech

By Cindee A. Tanuma, Executive Director  
Twentieth Anniversary Celebration at Promises to Keep  
October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008

---

Welcome everyone. I want to thank you all for coming tonight. The mission of this evening is simple: We want to say thank you. Caregivers does not often have to opportunity to say thank you in person to those that have helped us keep our doors open over the last twenty years.

I hope in the last hour, you each had the opportunity to meet other supporters of Caregivers. We invited current and past board members and staff members, Congregations and Civic Groups, Private and public donors, foundations, and community business members.

To the board members, past or present, in the audience, thank you for your years of service to Community Caregivers. Your belief in the work we do and your help on fundraisers, strategic planning, and mission have helped us develop into a strong, well functioning organization. Each one of you made your mark on Caregivers and made it what it is today.

Staff, past and present, thank you for your creativity, determination, faith in the mission and hard work. Thank you for keeping our good reputation and rapport with community members, town and private funders, the media and all the volunteers and clients. The job does not come with a lot of perks, but it makes up for it in the instant gratification you all got each day from knowing how valuable your work was.

Churches and civic groups: With your help over the past twenty years, we have recruited over 1100 volunteers that have helped over 1300 people. Thank you for letting us speak at your mission moments, coffee hours, breakfast meetings and youth and confirmation groups. Thank you for posting our constant pleas in your bulletins and newsletters. Your relationship with us is so important for the growth and goal of our program.

Individual donors, thank you for each donation you have given, big or small. We have a very modest budget at Caregivers with very little overhead. The small amount you are willing to give can go a long way to helping the operations of our organization. You have gotten us through good times and bad. You have continued to give, even when sometimes it was a struggle to make ends meets. Maybe you donated because you receive our services, maybe a loved one was helped by our program or loaner's closet, or maybe you just want to silently be a part of the great work that others are doing.

Companies and businesses that have supported us financially or through in-kind capacities: Thank you for believing in the work we do. Your generous donations will allow us to help hundreds more elderly and disabled individuals over the next twenty years. Thank you for your help on one-time mission projects, making meals for the homebound and giving us discounts on merchandise.

Town welfare workers and administrators: We never take our relationship with you for granted. NH Towns are not required to disperse human service dollars to agencies. We feel so fortunate to live in a part of the state that values community organization. We are glad to help the members of your towns that need help and will continue to regardless of the funding that you are able to allocate.

United Way, thank you for believing in us and helping us define our product and how we record our measurable objectives. Your training has allowed us to get other funding that we may not have without your help and partnership.

Grant and foundation managers, your sustainable operation grants and onetime project grants have allowed us to widen our mission, strengthen our program and recruit volunteers and clients on a bigger and better scale.

So, I think I have made my point how grateful we are to each of you that have come and those that were unable to attend.

I would like to close with telling you the history of Caregivers that I recently learned from a meeting with Joyce Gray, the founding executive director of Caregivers. I hope you find it as interesting as I had.

In 1988, Joyce Gray got a call from Peter Hey, the then Reverend of St. Luke's Methodist Church. Peter and Joyce went to seminary together and he explained to her an idea he had had for a much needed group. He wanted to gather a coalition of seven local churches to collectively help the elderly and disabled remain in their homes as long as possible. The idea was modeled on the three year old caregiving group in Manchester. He was finding, as we do today, that most elderly residents either make too much to be eligible for state assistance and to little to pay for services out of pocket. They were in a gap area that was being underserved or not served at all. He wanted to hire a staff member and asked Joyce to apply. Joyce had had experience founding a local hospice program and was ready for the challenge.

The organization started out of her kitchen and her home phone. The board worked hard to publicize the new program through the media and churches. Joyce can remember the first day she got a call from a person inquiring about volunteer positions and one that needed help around the house. After they received a three year start up grant from the Alexander Eastman Foundation, they secured an office in the Nutfield Professional Building that they shared with the hospice program and started their hard work.

Within a year they had 100 volunteers and 50 clients. Mostly all volunteers were in one-on-one matches. Joyce prided herself on meeting each client herself and paying special attention to their needs and the volunteer they were matched up with.

At the end of the three years, they had moved two more times, hired a secretary and volunteer coordinator and managed nearly 200 volunteers. The early years were not easy

financially but with the help of donors like you over the past twenty years, we have come to a place of security and diversity.

I have been with the organization for four years now and I am so happy I have been given the opportunity to meet so many inspiring clients, selfless volunteers and generous donors.

I would now like to introduce the guest speaker for this evening, Mary Ellen Jackson. Mary Ellen assumed the leadership role as the Executive Director for NHCN in June 2005 and brought to the position more than 15 years of nonprofit leadership and management experience. In the past, Mary Ellen served as Executive Director for FamilyStrength, a statewide nonprofit providing a range of behavioral health home-based services for children and families and before this position directed The HUB Family Resource Center of Strafford County which provides a variety of family support programs.

In addition Mary Ellen's experience includes employment with Seacoast Mental Health Center as a grant writer and program manager, and as a consultant to nonprofits for strategic planning and organizational management. In addition she was an adjunct professor of nonprofit grant writing at the Thompson School at UNH. In 2001 Mary Ellen was awarded the Douglass Eldridge Leadership Award from the Greater Seacoast United Way.

Mary Ellen holds a Bachelors Degree in Journalism and Psychology from UNH and a Masters Degree in Organizational Management from New England College. She resides in Strafford with her husband, and enjoys time with her grown children, gardening, and kayaking.

Mary Ellen...(wave for her to come up)