



## Youth, Families, Community

PHOTO: PIXABAY

# Extension national evidence-based program seeks to improve caregiver well-being

*More than one in five Americans provide unpaid help to an adult relative, friend or child with special needs. While caregiving may be a rewarding experience, it can also create tremendous physical, mental, emotional and financial strain, resulting in negative health impacts. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened the stress and adverse health effects.*

*Land-grant university Extension professionals implemented Powerful Tools for Caregivers, a national evidence-based program that provides much-needed support in-person or online for six sessions. Program delivery varied to meet local needs.*

### Successful examples include:

- In **Kansas**, Extension professionals empowered caregivers to adopt self-care practices that include managing stress, increasing communication and tackling challenges. These strategies prevent burnout and improve relationships. All participants reported learning new strategies to cope with stress and emotional issues, communicate more effectively, problem-solve and make end-of-life decisions. By sharing experiences, caregivers learned they are not alone.
- In **North Dakota**, both Extension professionals and local community leaders are trained as class leaders. They offered 13 workshops. Of the 79 participants, over half reported improvements in confidence in asking for help with tasks needed for caregiving, understanding that their emotions are normal responses, finding positive coping strategies for stress and increasing their abilities to find resources in their areas. Over 90% of caregivers intend to use action plans and positive self-talk; 75% to 78% intend to use relaxation tools, “I” messages and long-range goal setting.

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## **Youth, Families, Community**

Improving the health and well-being of family caregivers helps keep loved ones in their homes and communities, preserves their quality of life and saves taxpayers money by delaying more costly care options.