

## “Powerful Tools” series helps caregivers cope

Caring for an aging or disabled parent, spouse or child while trying to maintain “normal” personal workloads and family roles can be a daunting task.

In Pottawattamie County, Iowa, for a variety of reasons, a growing number of residents find themselves in the role of primary caregiver to a family member or friend suffering from chronic disease, disability or age-related health problem. A six-week educational series, *Powerful Tools for Caregivers*, administered by Iowa State University Extension in partnership with Omaha-based Executive Service Corps, has helped fill an information void and reduce the emotional toll on those providing care.



Studies show that family caregivers have higher rates of depression, use more prescription drugs, visit the doctor more often, and tend to be more isolated than peers in their community. Caregivers taking the class indicated significant reductions in stress, more confidence, better balance to their lives, and improved ability to communicate needs during the caregiver process. Several also said knowledge gained from the class enabled them to make better decisions concerning their loved ones' care.



Iowa is one of 22 states offering the *Powerful Tools* series which consists of six weekly 2 ½ -hour sessions. Southwest 8 Senior Services sponsored the program in Pottawattamie County at no charge to participants. ISU Extension contributed professional staff, facilities, meals and handout materials. Ten family caregivers attended the entire series which ran Sept. 29-Nov. 3. Due to growing interest, additional series are planned in Council Bluffs Jan. 15 -Feb.

15 and in Mills County at Malvern April 7-May 12.

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“My wife of 60 years has dementia. This class helped me adapt to her illness and deal with my emotions as well as my guilt. My communication is better now that I know how to deal with my feelings and her way of life that is so different from her past personality. God bless and keep you for the help we received.”

- Senior caregiver and *Powerful Tools* participant

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For more information about this and other Iowa State University Extension programs and services, contact West Pottawattamie County Extension, 712-366-7070; Mary Hughes, Family Life Field Specialist, [mhughes@iastate.edu](mailto:mhughes@iastate.edu), OR, the ISU Extension website, [www.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.extension.iastate.edu).

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