

IN VICTORIA

Making a Crucial Difference

by Jenna J. Zark, Victoria
Emerald Crest by Augustana Care

They are our neighbors, friends, siblings and co-workers, thrust into caregiving roles with little notice or preparation. Their loved ones may be dealing with dementia or the aftermath of a stroke. They struggle daily with grief and other issues, while trying to figure out the practicalities of a life that feels like it's turned upside down.

Duane Gravley's wife had a stroke in 2016. She now lives at Augustana Care's Emerald Crest community in Burnsville and, for the past six months, Duane has attended a support group there.

"Obviously my wife's care and well being are overwhelmingly my first concern. However, I also have concerns and doubts about how I am reacting to her situation," he writes. "Is my grieving normal and when, if ever, will it subside? Should I continue to be employed or should I quit and spend more time with my wife? These are only a few of the questions I ask myself every hour of every day."

Gravley does not think of himself as a social person and says it took him many months to realize he could be helped by others who have gone through an adjustment process similar to his own. "I have found that discussing my reactions with [others] helped me understand and cope," Gravley says. "Often there are no good answers, but knowing that your emotions are not unique often helps."

Pastor Lette Gamble leads groups at all four Emerald Crest locations, including Burnsville, Minnetonka, Shakopee and Victoria. She believes support groups can be crucial in helping caregivers with feelings that can be overwhelming when a loved one becomes ill. Many participants echo Gravley's thoughts and find solace in being able to share their stories.



"We are taught, even pressured by our culture to be independent and deal with problems by ourselves," Gamble says. "What we don't realize is that we can learn and benefit from the journeys of others."

Gravley believes there are many caregivers like him who do not seek out the help they need. He tries to encourage others to attend support groups, knowing what they have done for him. "Even if perfect solutions are not always available, it's sometimes just good to know that other people have, and are having, the same challenges as you."

Attending this group is a good option if you're thinking about memory care for a loved one and are seeking a helpful group that can offer support and resources. To learn more about support groups at Emerald Crest, please call 612-554-6379. If you would like to interview our support group leader in Victoria, please call Jenna at 612-238-8552.

Located in Burnsville, Minnetonka, Shakopee and Victoria, Minnesota, Emerald Crest by Augustana Care memory care communities are inspired by residents and families. With a deep knowledge of memory care, we offer a specialized assisted living setting for older adults with Alzheimer's and similar conditions. Staff expertise allows us to create opportunities that go beyond conventional notions of memory care. To learn more, please visit www.emeraldcrest.com.



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