

**The beginning of a journey
Caregiving and the elderly**
By Katy Mason

May is Older Americans Month, and the theme for 2002 is America: A Community for All Ages. This theme, selected in recognition of the national community in which we live and in tribute to the American family, is the strength of our nation. Families are the main providers of care for older persons in our country, providing 95 percent of care to older persons with disabilities. We need to find ways to strengthen and support the caregivers in our community.

When an older person becomes ill, a family often enters uncharted territory. They might have no idea where to turn for information about home health care, legal issues, transportation, chore services, meal delivery or long-term care. There are organizations in Larimer and Weld Counties dedicated to helping caregivers through these difficult times. Elder Care Network of Larimer County (ECN) is an organization whose mission is to provide support to families who provide care for an older person. Call ECN at 495-3442. The Area Agency on Aging in Weld County (353-3800 ext. 3331) and in Larimer County (498-6802) are part of a nationwide network that follows the guidelines of the Older Americans Act. One of the most significant additions to the Older Americans Act is the new National Family Caregiver Support Program, which helps these agencies provide more services to caregivers. Parent Magazine and the Elder Care Network of Larimer County have collaborated to bring you this guide in order to provide information regarding caring for older adults, whether that be parents, grandparents, friends or neighbors. Most of us know someone in our life that needs assistance. Hopefully, this guide will assist you in finding the resources and the necessary support that is available to assist you in caring for your loved one.

Katy Mason is an information and referral specialist at the Larimer County Office on Aging.