

Family caregivers lauded in November

By **APRIL FEAGLEY**
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November is National Family Caregivers Month designated to honor those who dedicate themselves to caring for an ill, disabled or aged family member.

The National Alliance for Caregiving estimates that more than 65 million people, 29 percent of the population of the United States, are responsible for caring for a family member and spend an average of 20 hours per week doing so. Thirteen percent spend 40 hours or more per week providing care.

"I would be lost without Pam," said Edna "Ernie" Souders of Mount Union of her daughter, Pam Fortney of Mount Union.

Fortney has cared for her mother over the past few years. "I help her with her grocery

shopping, laundry, going to the bank, taking her to the doctor, pretty much with anything she needs," Fortney said.

Souders began receiving hospice care from Home Nursing Agency in August, which provides Fortney with peace of mind.

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Photo by **APRIL FEAGLEY**

Edna "Ernie" Souders, left, and her daughter, Pam Fortney of Mount Union, looked through a family photo album at Souders' Orbisonia apartment Friday. Fortney, like many throughout the United States, helps to care for her mother.



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"It helps me tremendously to have them come in throughout the day and gives me relief to know she isn't here by herself because I wasn't able to be here like I wanted to be," said Fortney. "But knowing she has people here now is a relief. I know she's taken care of and they are here for her, too."

"It really helps me out, too," Souders said.

Like 51 percent of those receiving care from a family member, Souders is able to reside in her own home.

"I promised her when she got really sick back in April that she wouldn't go into a nursing

home," Fortney said. "And I'm going to uphold my promise."

Having Home Nursing Agency caregivers and nurses providing assistance also allows Fortney to enjoy some time just visiting with her mother.

"Right now, it's hard to do much out and about with her being dependent on oxygen, so we talk about family and look at pictures together," she said. "She loves my dog. She calls him her baby. I bring him to visit her a couple times a week."

"I have to give him a treat each time he comes in," Souders said with a smile.

Darlene Gilliland, one of Souders' caregivers through Home Nursing, said it's helpful

whenever family members step in to help take care of their loved one.

"It really does make a difference whenever a family member steps up," she said.

While the situation can be difficult and family caregivers often feel torn between employment, caring for children and caring for parents, knowing they are making a difference keeps them going.

"Family comes first. There will always be time in the future for the other things," Fortney said. "You only have one mother so you do what you've got to do."

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