November is National Family Caregivers Month — a month when we’re reminded that many ordinary folks, like you and me, do some extraordinary things. According to national estimates, there are over 65 million people who are caring for family members, and the value of the unpaid care provided is estimated to be worth $375 billion!

Having cared for my father at the end of his life, I know both the joy and the pain that this journey brings.

Some caregivers are fortunate to have the love and support of family, friends and community as they take on the responsibility to care for a loved one. They have other folks who will share the tasks of caregiving, give them a night off, do the shopping for them or cut the grass — so that the caregiver doesn’t have to. They have people who will drop off meals or have the loved one stay with them for a week so the caregiver can take a vacation without worry.

And some caregivers are not as fortunate. Every day is a strict balancing act, with little time for self-care. They may be juggling their own jobs or simultaneously caring for children while caring for a parent or grandparent.

If you are either of these folks, I want to say to you how grateful we are that you do what you do, that you have enough love in your heart to be a caregiver — you are very special.

Regardless of what your situation may be, there may be times when you feel alone or invisible on this journey. The Department of Aging and Community Living wants you to know that we see you, we care, and we are with you — you are not alone.

You can reach out to us for information on the supports that are available in Washington, D.C. Whether it’s joining a virtual support group, getting some help to develop your own caregiver plan, or locating a variety of resources available in your community, our staff are ready to talk with you about your situation and how we can help you in your journey. Call us at 202-724-5626.

I’ve spent a lot of time over the years working with families and caregivers, and every single person has told me how grateful they were to be able to give back to someone who needed them, often someone who once took care of them. Many daughters and sons, wives and husbands, and neighbors and friends faithfully take on this task not knowing how long or how hard the road will be, but sure that it is a journey they will never regret.

If you are a caregiver, or if you are reading this and it brings to mind someone you know who is currently a caregiver, then I want to remind you — you also need to care for yourself! So, I offer these tips to all about taking care of ourselves, especially in this interesting time — this new normal for now. But I especially hope that it’s helpful to the caregivers among us:

1. **Be Intentional.** Spend time with yourself each morning,
George Washington University Study Seeks Volunteers

George Washington University is conducting a research study on the mental and physical impact of caregiving on Black American Caregivers.

You may be eligible to participate if:
• You are an adult Black male between the ages of 30-85
• You are caring for a family member or loved one (spouse, sibling, parents or family friend) diagnosed with Alzheimer’s or dementia
• You agree to participate in the study

The study involves:
• Up to three virtual visits for a total of 23 hours
• Completion of a questionnaire about health, sleep and stress
• Saliva samples
• Memory and thinking tests
• Compensation of up to $75 and travel reimbursement

For more information, call 202-994-1728 or email rwturnerlab@gw.edu

Nutrition Corner: Fall Seasonal Produce

The first foods that come to mind for many people during the colder months of the year are holiday treats and baked goods. However, it is important to remember that there is so much produce in season in the Washington, D.C. area during autumn, so there is no need to limit your produce intake to the summer. Here are a few fruits and vegetables that are at their tastiest in the fall in the District.

1. Apples
2. Pears
3. Sweet potatoes
4. Squash (especially acorn and butternut)
5. Radishes
6. Broccoli
7. Cauliflower
8. Carrots
9. Beets
10. Eggplants

While delicious fresh, apples and pears can also be eaten oven-baked or diced and cooked in a bit of water and cinnamon on the stove. These autumn vegetables really shine when oven-roasted with a bit of olive oil and your choice of spices or herbs; they also make hearty soups and stews.

Many farmers markets are open with COVID-19 precautions in place, and there are several organizations in the District working to deliver boxed produce to seniors. For more information, call us at 202-724-5626, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.