

By JUDY WAKEFIELD
STAFF WRITER

Sandwiched between aging parents and an about-to-be-college-age daughter was Emily Kearns, an extremely tired, married, college professor from Andover. Torn between caring for her family and working full time, Kearns stepped off that emotional treadmill.

She left her job.

Kearns is part of a growing number of people, baby boomers, who are part of the so-called sandwich generation. For many, balancing the demands is daunting.

Kearns wanted to be with her dying father who was suffering from Alzheimer's and her aging mother, who suffers from dementia. She also wanted to have more time with her daughter, Myriam, who was about to graduate from Andover High School and leave home for college.

"I think sandwich is the right word, as you are caring for parents and kids and you're in the middle," said Kearns, who grew up in town. "You're right in the middle of caregiving, and it's extremely tiring.

"My generation was told we could do it all, and it's a struggle," said Kearns, now 48. "It's so important to share resources."

Kearns will tell more of her story when the "Coping With Caregiving" series for the Sandwich Generation steps off at the Andover Senior Center, off Whittier Court behind Town Offices. She's one of four local baby boomers

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Emily Kearns of Andover, who will speak June 10 at the Senior Center

scheduled to speak at a June 10 lecture. The group plans to speak honestly and openly about the key issues facing people who are raising kids and also taking care of aging parents.

"I think it's great that the Senior Center is doing this because there are so many of us," Kearns said. "Caregiving is so important."

Karen Payne-Taylor, who helped launch the program, said baby boomers are in an unusual position because parents are living longer thanks to medical

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Slice of life with the sandwich generation

LECTURES: Andover mom, caregiver to speak on issues facing 'sandwich generation'

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technology.

She cited statistics from the Pew Research Center that show one out of every eight Americans aged 40 to 60 is both raising a child and caring for a parent. Meanwhile, census data shows the national average lifespan continues to creep up and is now at 78.

"It's no wonder that there are a plethora of issues facing these boomers as they try to meet the needs of the people closest to them," Payne-Taylor said.

How to find the time, manage the costs involved and cope emotionally are some of the key issues

"COPING WITH CAREGIVING" SESSIONS FOR THE SANDWICH GENERATION

■ **June 3: Sandwich Services:** Kristine Arakelian, LCSW, MPH, Outreach Coordinator, Andover Senior Center and Louise Edelblute, RN, Community Geriatric Nurse, will explore key areas caregivers face and available community resources.

■ **June 10: Sandwich Shop Talk:** Four local baby-boomers share their stories and experiences about caring for two generations.

■ **June 17: Sandwich Education:** Senior caregiving experts share more than 60 years of combined experience in dealing with various potential senior living scenarios and how to pay for them.

■ **June 24: Sandwich Strategies:** Kelley MacDonald, RN, MSN, Community Liaison from Merrimack Valley's Home Health Foundation and Judy Trerotola, local Council on Aging, talk about the future of caregiving.

All programs will be held at the Andover Senior Center. Advance registration is appreciated. Cost of series is \$20, includes a lunch of salad, sandwich, fruit and drink. For more information call Karen Payne-Taylor, Andover Senior Center's BoomerVenture

to be covered in the series. "It just doesn't happen until it

happens, and we've found that it is rare to hear from someone before

the crisis," she said, adding that she hopes this series will help

boomers prepare themselves.

For Kearns, the first step was to get off the emotional treadmill — which she did. She realized she wanted to be with her aging parents in their last days and also have enough time with her husband and daughter.

"I'm fortunate that my husband works and I could take time off from work," she said.

Under the Family Leave Act, she took an unpaid year off from teaching sociology at Emerson College in Boston. Most importantly, she was with her father, Donald Kearns, formerly of Andover, when he died in November 2006. He was 83.

She is still on sabbatical as she is tending to her mother, Ellen Kearns, 83, who now lives in a Wilmington nursing home and who suffers from dementia.

Meanwhile, Myriam Alexander-Kearns has turned 20. She will be a senior this fall at Barnard College/Columbia University in New York City. She has been at the University of Bristol in the UK this past spring and arrives home June 16.

In her heart, Kearns knows she has been there for each of them and there's a sense of peacefulness about that for her.

"I have absolutely no regrets," she said.

Contact

Karen Payne-Taylor
978 623-8321
kpaynetaylor@andoverma.gov

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(Andover Senior Center)
36 Bartlet Street
Andover, MA 01810