New guide for family caregivers

aring for Loved Ones with Advanced MS: A Guide for Families is a comprehensive look at what families need to know when a family member has advanced MS that is so severe the person cannot be left alone for any extended period and has complex clinical issues. Edited by Dorothy E. Northrop, MSW, ACSW, and Debra Frankel, MS, OTR, with input from key Society staff and a mul-

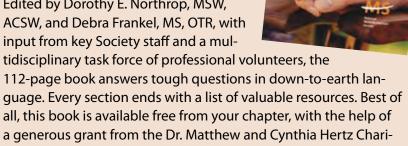


table Foundation. Just call **1-800-344-4867** and ask for a copy.

Caring for Loved Ones with Advanced MS:

A Guide for Families

When a caregiver leaves for college

by Judi Hasson

Jonathan Crabtree usually left for high school at 6:30 a.m. But his day did not end when he came home. He would then help his mother, Debbie, who has multiple sclerosis and is quadriplegic.

But in September 2007, Jonathan, an only child, left for college, helped by a \$3,000 college scholarship from the National MS Society.

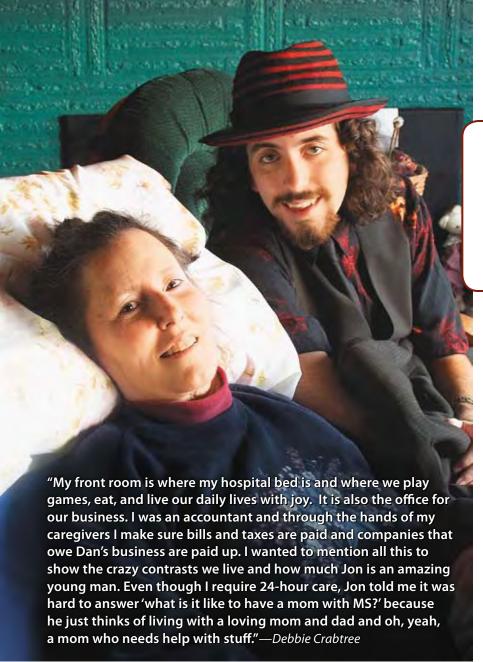
A new reality

Like many families who live with MS, Debbie, Jonathan, and his father, Daniel, a consultant who works from home, had to deal with a new reality when Jonathan started college. Gone is the extra set of hands to help out, and more importantly, gone is the child's close understanding of the needs of a parent with MS.

"It's a major adjustment for everyone," said Jonathan, a freshman at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, far away from his family in Kingston, Washington. "The biggest thing in going away is the emotional stuff," he said.

The secondary caregiver

Jonathan had handled his mother's respiratory machine when she had trouble breathing. But he also helped out with "a lot of the stuff that most people take for granted," he said. "I scratch



her head when it itches. I give her blankets if she gets cold in the middle of the night."

Now the Crabtrees rely more on professional caregivers, especially when Daniel is away on business. They have three aides a day because Debbie needs 24-hour care. Jonathan said his family is slowly getting used to his absence.

Treating parents like parents

For her part, Debbie is very proud of her son. "The best thing

you can do for a parent with MS is to treat them like your parent, and enjoy your college years without guilt or resentment," she told **Momentum** in an e-mail created with her voice-activated computer.

And that's exactly what Jonathan is doing. He hopes to major in radio broadcasting and is involved with the college theater. He uses technology to stay in touch, seeing his mom with a Webcam or talking to her on The term "empty nest" gains an extra dimension when a child who leaves for college is also a caregiver. When a parent has advanced MS, the entire family may need to adjust to a new reality.

the phone once or twice a week. "We keep in touch a lot," he said. "I am confident that there are people back home taking care of her," he said. "God has blessed me with an amazing family."

Judi Hasson is a Washington, DC, journalist. She was diagnosed with MS in September 2007.

The National MS Society Scholarship Program

The Society strongly believes that MS shouldn't stand in the way of an education. Our scholarship program exists to help highly qualified students who have MS or live with MS in their families to achieve their academic potential. Awards range from \$1,000 to \$3,000, with selected top scholars annually receiving four-year awards. For applications or information on supporting the program, visit nationalmssociety .org/Scholarship.

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