



## Caregiving and TV – the First Annual CARE-Y Awards

By: Sherri Snelling

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While we still have miles to go to have our society at large to acknowledge the important role of family caregivers – I am happy to report that TV producers, directors, actors and writers have been stepping up to showcase this important “lifestage” of family caregiving in some of our recent small screen fare.

In honor of the upcoming Emmys this weekend which kicks off the start of the new fall TV season, I have decided to create my own version of the Emmys – the “CARE-YS” showcasing the best of TV’s portrayal of family caregiving.

In addition, I want to recognize the real-life caregivers who happen to work in television news and entertainment.

### First Annual CARE-Y Awards - Awards for TV Programs

#### **Award for Best Spousal Caregiver portrayed by a Female:**

Kitty Walker McCallister (Calista Flockhart) on *Brothers & Sisters* (ABC) - Cares for her husband, Robert McCallister (played by Rob Lowe), who has had a heart attack and bypass surgery while she also cares for their newly adopted child.

#### **Award for Best Spousal Caregiver portrayed by a Male:**

Bernard Nadler (Sam Anderson) on *LOST* (ABC) – takes care of his wife, Rose, who had an inoperable brain tumor until they are stranded on the island and she is miraculously now in remission.

#### **Award for Best Sandwich Generation Caregiver portrayal:**

Betty Draper (January Jones) on *Mad Men* (AMC) who took care of her father, Gene, who had a stroke and early signs of dementia until he passed away on a recent episode (special kudos to her husband Don Draper, played by Jon Hamm, who brokered the deal that her father come live with them).

#### **Award for Best Female Caregiver Caring for a Parent In A Starring Role (tie):**

Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo) on *Grey’s Anatomy* (ABC) who cared for her mother with Alzheimer’s until she passed away and Miranda Hobbes (Cynthia Nixon) on *Sex and the City* (HBO/TBS) who is caring for mother-in-law with Alzheimer’s.

#### **Award for Best Male Caregiver Caring for a Parent In A Starring Role:**

Elliott Stabler (Christopher Meloni) on *Law & Order: SVU* (NBC) who takes care of his mother who has bi-polar disorder.

**Award for Best Caregiver Living with their Older Parent portrayal:**

Dr. Donald "Ducky" Mallard (David McCallum) the 60-something medical examiner on *NCIS* (CBS), who until she passed away last season, was living with and caring for his elderly mother in her home (she was in her 90s).

**Award for Most Eccentric Caregiver portrayal:**

Little Edie Bouvier Beale (Drew Barrymore) in *Grey Gardens* (HBO) she portrayed the real-life Little Edie Bouvier Beale (from the Mayles' documentary of the same name) who lived with and cared for her mother, Big Edie (Jessica Lange) in a decaying Hamptons mansion

**Award for Best Caregiver of an In-Law In a Made-for-TV Movie (In Memorium):**

Farrah Fawcett in *Between Two Women*, a 1986 made-for TV movie in which Fawcett (who recently lost her brave Battle with cancer) starred as a woman who comes to care for her infuriating and disapproving mother-in-law (Colleen Dewhurst) after she suffers a stroke.

**Award for Best Caregiver in a Recent TV DVD Release:**

Michael Steadman (Ken Olin) on *thirtysomething* (season 1 released on DVD Sept 1) who cared for his father who had cancer – he opted for hospice and palliative care at home in this late 1980s TV drama about yuppies (also known as Baby Boomers).

**Award for Best TV Documentary That Includes Caregiving:**

HBO – *The Alzheimer's Project*, a special documentary produced by Maria Shriver whose dad, Sargent, has Alzheimer's.

**Special Caregiver TV Hall of Fame:**

Nash Bridges (Don Johnson) who starred in *Nash Bridges* (CBS) who supported his sister as they cared for their dad with Alzheimer's.

Lily Manning (Sela Ward) who starred in *Once and Again* (ABC) who cared for her mother who had early Alzheimer's; she also cared for her brother, Aaron (played by Patrick Dempsey), who was mentally handicapped.

Dorothy Zbornak (the late, great Bea Arthur) who starred on *Golden Girls* (NBC) for 7 years. This was a comedic look at a 60-something woman living with her older mother (in her 80s), as well as her two friends (also in their 60s) -- all in the same home in Miami.

## First Annual CARE-Y Awards - Real-Life Caregivers in TV Careers

### **Award for Best Caregiver Morning Show Host:**

Meredith Viera of NBC's *Today Show*, who cares for her husband with multiple sclerosis (MS). He has also twice battled colon cancer. Special mention to her fellow host Matt Lauer, who cared for his father and talked eloquently about hospice care in his father's final months and days.

### **Award for Best Caregiver Evening News Anchor:**

Katie Couric, anchor of *CBS Evening News with Katie Couric*, who cared for her husband who died of colon cancer. Her sister also passed away from pancreatic cancer. Couric has been a tireless advocate for colon cancer screenings and education.

### **Award for Best Caregiver In a Daytime Show:**

Martha Stewart, star of *The Martha Stewart Show* (NBC), who cared for her mother before she passed away almost 2 years ago. Despite no longer being a caregiver, Martha continues to be one of the most passionate advocates for family caregivers.

### **Award for Best Caregiver in a Top-Rated Show:**

Marg Helgenberger of the original *CSI* (CBS) who cares for her father who has multiple sclerosis.

### **Award for Best Caregiver in New Series Debuts:**

Victor Garber who co-starred in last season's *Eli Stone* (ABC) and this fall's new show, *Glee* (Fox), cared for his mother who had Alzheimer's. Incidentally, Garber lives with type 1 diabetes.

### **Award for Best Example of Love in a Spousal Caregiver:**

Ann Lopez, married to TV comedian and new TBS late night talk show host, George Lopez, donated her kidney to her ailing husband in 2005 for a life-saving transplant operation.

### **Award for Best "Braveheart" Spousal Caregivers of TV stars**

A tie between Tracy Pollan (a TV star in her own right), wife of TV veteran Michael J. Fox (*Spin City*, *Family Ties* and the recent Emmy-nominated special *Michael J. Fox – The Adventures of an Incurable Optimist*) who suffers from Parkinson's disease, caring for both her husband and their four children.

and

Lisa Niemi, who for over 34 years had been with her husband, Patrick Swayze (*North & South* mini-series, currently on A&E's *The Beast*). For the last two years she bravely helped him fight his battle with pancreatic cancer- our heart goes out to Lisa and the Swayze family at his passing on Monday

### **Award for Best Caregiver of a Friend**

Alana Stewart and Ryan O'Neal whose love and support of Farrah Fawcett in her brave battle with anal cancer, showed us the true meaning of friendship in the NBC special documentary *Farrah's Story*.

*Thank you to all who help raise awareness for family caregivers!*

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## About Sherri Snelling

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Sherri Snelling, CEO and founder of the Caregiving Club, is a nationally recognized expert on America's 65 million family caregivers with special emphasis on how to help caregivers balance "self care" while caring for a loved one. She is also executive producer and host of the caregiving TV program *Handle With Care*. You can find more information at: [www.caregivingclub.com](http://www.caregivingclub.com).