

100+ Women Who Care support caregivers

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Caring for a loved one with a disability is a profound expression of love, yet it can be emotionally exhausting, financially overwhelming, and physically draining.

Across Arizona, countless parents,

grandparents, and relatives quietly shoulder this responsibility every day, navigating complex medical systems, advocating for services, juggling work and caregiving, and holding families together through resilience and determination.

Care 4 the Caregivers, a nonprofit built

from lived experience, exists to support these extraordinary individuals by ensuring that those who give so much receive the care and connection they deserve.

Care 4 the Caregivers was founded in Arizona in 2020 by Michele Thorne and Dr. Gabrielle Ficchi. With their com-

bined disability and caregiving experience, they knew firsthand how deeply caregivers of disabled children needed a space built for them – a place to feel understood, supported, and connected.

The goal was to create a safe place to

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Celebrating 100+ Women Who Care's gift to Care 4 the Givers are, from left, Jacqueline Destremps, Amy Ward, Dr. Gabrielle Ficchi and Libby Murphy. *(Special to the Progress)*

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support all family caregivers: mothers, fathers, grandparents, and relatives devoting their lives to raising children with disabilities.

Family caregivers of children with disabilities face daily demands that go far beyond what most people ever see.

Many juggle therapy schedules, medical appointments, behavioral interventions, and individualized educational plans while also navigating insurance, advocating for services, and trying to maintain employment.

The result is often chronic stress, sleep deprivation, financial strain, and profound social isolation.

In Arizona alone, more than 855,000 family caregivers provide support valued at over \$9 billion annually—yet many receive little to no formal assistance.

Care 4 the Caregivers steps into this gap with programs designed to nurture, strengthen, and empower families.

Its services range from one-on-one

consultations and counseling referrals to evidence-based parenting programs like Stepping Stones Triple P, which equips caregivers with practical tools for behavioral and developmental challenges.

Support groups such as After the Diagnosis and The Grandparent Connection offer spaces where caregivers can share openly, reducing the loneliness that so often accompanies their journey.

Monthly community gatherings provide meals, activities, and free childcare, giving families rare moments of respite.

Additional offerings include fitness and meditation classes, wellness resources, educational workshops on disability advocacy and navigation, and statewide policy work through the Disability Alliance and Policy Alliance (DAPA), where caregiver voices are elevated to influence meaningful change.

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All this work unfolds at a time when federal funding cuts threaten disability programs across the country.

Reductions to special education, housing support, and disability navigation services may increase waitlists and restrict access to essential care, placing even greater pressure on families already struggling to meet their loved ones' needs.

Support for caregivers is not simply helpful – it is urgent.

In November, Gabrielle Ficchi shared the mission of the organization with 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun's Scottsdale group. The members were moved by the organization's story, the critical needs of caregivers throughout Arizona, and the hope this nonprofit brings to families.

They selected the nonprofit as their quarterly recipient, awarding \$16,650 to strengthen programs, expand services, and ensure that caregivers receive the support they need to continue caring for their children with love, patience, and resilience.

"The support from 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun means caregivers can move from isolation into a space where they are truly seen and supported.

These funds ensure they can receive counseling, community, and education at no cost.

"When caregivers are supported, their quality of life improves, and their children and families are better able to thrive—and that is exactly what this gift makes possible. It is an investment in the mental health of caregivers and in the futures of the children they love," Ficchi said.

Since 2015, 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun has donated more than \$1.5 million to local nonprofits—a testament to what becomes possible when generosity meets intention.

Those wishing to be part of this ongoing collective giving movement are invited to attend the next Scottsdale giving circle at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 28 at the HomeSmart Corporate Office.

Register at 100wwcvalleyofthesun.org. To learn more about Care 4 the Caregivers, visit care4thecaregivers.org. 