

**CARING FOR ELDERLY PARENTS?
BALANCING FAMILY WITH WORK OR STUDIES?
YOU MAY BE PART OF THE SANDWICH GENERATION...**

by **Kelly Howarth, M. Ed., Dpl. Ad. Ed.**

“I’m really not sure I should go....” mused Alessandra, contemplating a much-needed long weekend away with her husband and preschool children. “They might call to say they have found Mom a long-term placement.” Her Alzheimer’s mother was awaiting a bed in a long-term care facility close to Alessandra’s home and it could be any day now. She felt that she needed to be there to help her mother make the transition from her current interim placement, especially since her brother was working abroad.

Sitting across the café table from Alessandra, her friend Shelley retorted: “It is better than what’s happening with my Aunt and Uncle right now...I’m running back and forth between Montreal and Toronto because they are in two different nursing homes and some kind of crisis always seems to come up! I’m running ragged, trying to hold down a part-time job and get the twins ready for college in the Fall.”

“Sounds like you two are pretty sandwiched!” observed Tamara “That’s a case for staying single! But even I am feeling the stress of being a caregiver as well as doing all my course work.” Tamara was single and back in school, with her newly widowed mother living with her.

These adults are part of a growing phenomenon: The Sandwich Generation, caught between the diverse needs of their own lives and those of their elderly parents or relatives. Typically in middle adulthood, Sandwichers are finding themselves caring for an elderly relative while juggling careers, children, family needs, studies, and more. They are suddenly thrust into the situation of making life-altering decisions with and for their elderly parent or relative. They are not used to this new role of taking care of their parents’ financial, physical, emotional, and social needs. And their time is often compromised as they manage full lives of their own!

The QUEBEC ASSOCIATION FOR ADULT LEARNING’s (QAAL’s) *Empowering the Sandwich Generation Project*, sponsored by the Department of Canadian Heritage, aims to address these issues. A two-day workshop, Day 1 explores the various issues involved in being part of the Sandwich Generation, followed by Day 2, which is designed to train its participants as Community Facilitators who will start a Learning Circle in their community, providing support for caregivers.

Facilitated by either Fiona Clark or Kelly Howarth, these workshops will take place between September 2004 and March 2005, around the province of Quebec—Ormstown (September), West Quebec (2005), Gaspé (2005), The Eastern Townships (February 4 & 5, 2005 in Lennoxville and March 11 & 12 in Cowansville), and the Magdalen Islands (March, 2005). The first day workshop is open to a maximum of 25 participants, with the second day open to a maximum of 6.

If you are caring for an elderly parent/relative and feel sandwiched between the diverse needs of your family and personal lives while doing so, then this interactive workshop is for YOU! If you are interested in starting a Learning Circle in your community to give support to those feeling sandwiched between their own lives/families and their elderly parents, then both workshops are for YOU! Please contact your local Association or QAAL (514-848-2424, ext. 2036) to find out more about pre-registering for these informative and timely workshops in your community. We look forward to working with you!