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Be Alert for a Job Offer You Can't Refuse: "Unpaid Caregiver," Warns Long-Term Care Leader Ken Merritt of ACSI Partners LLC

Fayetteville, AR April 18, 2017 -- "America faces a senior health crisis that is also an employment crisis," says Ken Merritt of ACSI Partners LLC, one of the nation's largest long-term care insurance agencies.

In most U.S. households an out-of-the-blue "job offer" will suddenly appear.

- **Urgently needed:** caregiver.
- **Duties:** look after an aging family member 24/7.
- **Pay:** zero.

"This can be disruptive," says Merritt, "but with good planning, it needn't be."

The demand for senior caregiving is huge. About 70% of those over 65 will need help with the activities of daily living at some point, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "These activities are basic tasks we normally take for granted," says Merritt. "Things like eating, moving around, bathing, and toileting."

In families with two or more seniors, the odds approach 100% that at least one will need caregiving services sooner or later. That creates millions of caregiving "jobs." Most go to unpaid family members or friends, and their ranks are legion.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 40 million unpaid caregivers currently look after adults ages 65 and older. That's more than a quarter of the entire U.S. workforce. And new caregivers enter the ranks every year.

When these services are extensive, the toll on the caregiver can be great. According to a 2015 report from the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, heavy-duty caregivers (who often perform medical or nursing tasks without preparation) reported negative effects. A majority, 63%, said the intense caregiving made their own health worse.

"And when full-time caregiving also leads to quitting your job or reducing your work hours," says Merritt, "financial stresses make matters worse."

When volunteer caregiving is more limited, it can be a different story. "The extent of caregiving seems key," observes Merritt. "It would appear that some caregiving is OK and even enriching." Merritt points to a Pew Research study revealing that most caregivers found caring for an older loved one rewarding.

"The right balance is vital," says Merritt. "Supplying some care personally, and hiring professionals to supply the rest."

Appropriate services for family members include companionship; emotional support; handling paperwork such as paying bills; and assisting with some, but not all, activities of daily living.

Appropriate services for professionals include monitoring the loved-one during working hours; helping with activities of daily living when family cannot be present; and any assistance requiring medical or nursing skill.

To be in a position to pay for professional caregiving, Merritt's organization recommends five options:

- Long-term care insurance
- Critical illness insurance
- Life insurance (with LTC rider)
- An annuity (with LTC rider)
- Savings, such as a tax-advantaged Health Savings Account

"Our advisors are glad to walk anyone through these options, in person or by phone," says Merritt.

Information is available from Merritt at ken.merritt@acsiapartners.com, <http://kenmerritt4ltc.com> or 479-444-8834.

Ken Merritt is a leading long-term care agent serving consumers and organizations in AR, with colleagues covering all other parts of

the country.

In California the company is known as xACSI A Partners Insurance Agency; in other states, as ACSIA Partners.

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