



Photos by Scott Mulford

**'WE ALL AGE'** — That was just one of the messages at a day-long conference on aging sponsored by the diocesan Office for Pro-Life and Special Ministries. Sara L. Lieber of Senior Sidekicks (above) and Zach Wichmann of the Catholic Conference of Illinois (right) were presenters.

## When you're the caregiver

By SCOTT MULFORD  
Editor

Observing that “no real training exists for family caregivers,” Donna Moore extended an invitation to the community to attend a conference on aging held at the Cathedral Atrium on Aug. 26.

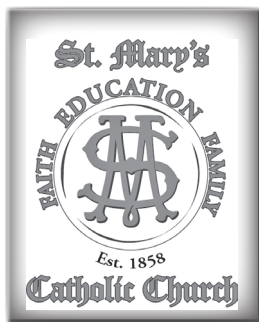
“But, there are things an individual can do to make it easier when the time comes to step in to help parents,” said Moore, director of the Office for Pro-Life Activities and Special Ministries for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois in her introduction.

Speakers included Sara L. Lieber, director of Senior Sidekicks, a Springfield organization which focuses on “early intervention, prevention, family support and empowerment,” according to its website [www.seniorsidekicks.com](http://www.seniorsidekicks.com).

Lieber illustrated her presentation “Preparing to Parent Your Parent” with the alarming assertion that “the eventual scale of the aging population will strain current systems.” And, Lieber maintained, the two-year budget impasse all Illinoisans just experienced only put added strains on the situation.

Lieber lauded Japan as a culture that reveres its aged citizens. Does the United States, Lieber rhetorically asked the conference. She said the average caregiver in the U.S. now spends an average of five years in the role. Lieber works with, and counsels, caregivers who themselves, are in their 70s.

Others contributors at the Aug. 26 conference included representatives from the Springfield diocese, Catholic Charities and Zach Wichmann of the Catholic Conference of Illinois who stressed the importance of holding “end of life” discussions with loved ones and to have an Ethical and Religious Directive on file and easy to find when needed.



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