

## **October 2018 Caregiver of the Month: Aaron King!**



Aaron King has a special place in heart for his step mother, Joanna King. Ms. King suffered from Alzheimer's, lung, heart and kidney disease. Before Ms. King was placed in a skilled nursing facility, Aaron cared for her by cleaning her house, feeding her, taking her to the beauty shop and doctor's appointments, and making sure all of her needs were met. For five years, Aaron took on all of the caregiving duties alone, all while dealing with his own health problems. For Aaron, it was in his heart to take on this role. "I loved her and she loved me," Aaron says.

Before Ms. King's condition worsened over the years, she enjoyed going around and visiting her neighbors, and Aaron was happy to take her on these outings. Ms. King was a retired school teacher and a great story teller. Aaron remembers traveling around with her so she could tell her stories, some of which focused on African American folk lore. Ms. King was a member of the St. Louis Story Teller Society and also made African American dolls.

Aaron stated the top three things other caregivers should know are to "be there for the person because they do not like to be alone, take good care of them and simply love them." Aaron wished he had known before becoming a caregiver just how fast the person's health declines. Aaron's experience as a caregiver taught him to be patient, listen to the person you are caring for and make them happy.

Ms. King passed away this past spring at the age of 82, yet Aaron continues to pay kindness forward. He loves gardening and continues to take his tomatoes and okra to the senior citizens at the apartment complex that Ms. King resided in.