

# STROKE GROUP news

*Spring 2009: Newsletter for the Gainesville Stroke Support Group*

## Student Assistant Profile

by Jeanne Rochford

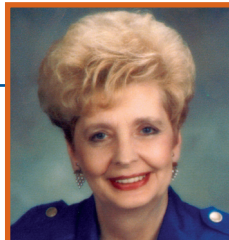
The group said good-bye to Matt Comer in December. Matt, 28, was one of the most helpful members of the staff at the Stroke Support Group. Matt was born in Okinawa Japan and has lived in Florida since he was three years old. He grew up in Palm Bay, attended college at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, and is currently a graduate student at the University of Florida in Gainesville, studying to be a speech-language pathologist. Matt worked as a registered nurse for three years and as a speech teacher in the public schools for a year and a half to help pay for his education.

Matt is married to his wife of two years, Emine, who is currently studying to be a pediatric nurse practitioner. Emine grew up in Jacksonville, Florida. They got married in Port Orange so that

their families only had to travel half way from Jacksonville and Melbourne. They live in an apartment near the mall with two cats, Tiger and Sebastian.

Matt was with the Stroke Support group from its beginning, January 2008. Matt has a very busy schedule but on the few occasions he has some free time likes to ride his bike, golf and read.

What Matt has gained most from the Stroke Support Group is meeting new people and establishing new relationships. The couple hopes to live in Orlando after they finish their graduate work. Matt aspires to work in a rehab setting and Emine wants to provide primary care at a pediatric office.



Jeanne Rochford

## What is the Gainesville Support Group?

The Gainesville Support Group meets every Thursday from 4–5 p.m. at the University of Florida 13th Street Speech and Hearing Clinic. The group welcomes anyone who has had a stroke as well as friends and family members of those who have had stroke. The purpose of the group is to provide an informal, confidential space to members to share experiences, support and information. It is not a therapy group. Members include people who have had a stroke recently or many years ago. Each month a speaker is invited to address group questions, and there are occasional group outings. Speakers in the past have included neurologists, psychotherapists, neuropsychologists, physical therapists, and speech-language pathologists. The group is informal and welcoming. Please come join us!

The group is sponsored through the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Florida. If you have any questions about the group, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Lisa Edmonds at [edmonds@ufl.edu](mailto:edmonds@ufl.edu) or 352-392-2113. Additionally, you can visit [www.clas.ufl.edu/users/edmonds](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/edmonds) and click on “Gainesville Stroke Support Group” to view current and past newsletters and to read announcements for any updates to this newsletter.

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Matt Comer

# Calendar of Events

More educational sessions may be scheduled throughout the spring.  
Visit [www.clas.ufl.edu/users/edmonds](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/edmonds) and click on "Gainesville Stroke Support Group" or call 352-392-2113 for schedule updates.

## February 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5 Open Meeting	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Open Meeting	13	14
15	16	17	18	19 Celebrate February Birthdays!	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Open Meeting	27	28

**February 5, 4–5 p.m.**

Open meeting

**February 12, 4–5 p.m.**

Open meeting

**February 19, 4–5 p.m.**

Celebrate February Birthdays!

**February 26, 4–5 p.m.**

Open meeting

## March 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5 Open Meeting	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19 Celebrate March Birthdays!	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Open Meeting	27	28
29	30	31				

**March 5, 4–5 p.m.**

Open meeting

**March 12, 4–5 p.m.**

UF Spring Break  
NO MEETING!

**March 19, 4–5 p.m.**

Celebrate March Birthdays!

**March 26, 4–5 p.m.**

Open meeting

## April 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Open Meeting	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 Celebrate April Birthdays!	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 Open Meeting	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 Last Spring Meeting	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

**April 2, 4–5 p.m.**

Open meeting

**April 9, 4–5 p.m.**

Celebrate April Birthdays!

**April 16, 4–5 p.m.**

Open meeting

**April 23, 4–5 p.m.**

Last Spring Meeting

# CareGiver Corner

By Michelle Bishop, PhD, Clinical Psychologist

Family caregivers play a critical role in the recovery and well being of those who have experienced a stroke. Stroke recovery continues for at least two years after onset, so most of the support during this period comes from friends and family. In addition, some of the changes that occur because of stroke can be long lasting. Being a family caregiver can be stressful. Most caregivers are thrust into the situation with little or no warning, and no formal training in caregiving. Caregiving can involve helping with personal care, dressing, feeding, bathing, as well as being a patient advocate, providing emotional support, and taking on other life and home responsibilities that the stroke survivor used to do.

Most challenging may be the adjustment to the life changes that can come with managing physical disabilities, emotional difficulties, or even personality changes, that some stroke survivors experience. Role changes are common and challenging. For example, spouses who were once in an “equal” partnership with one another may now find themselves in the “unequal” roles of “nurse-patient,” or even “parent-child,” if the stroke survivor is very dependent on the caregiver for aid, support, and decision-making. It is not surprising that caregivers can experience anxiety, guilt, depression, frustration, resentment, impatience, and fear.

**“Most challenging may be the adjustment to the life changes that can come with managing physical disabilities, emotional difficulties, or even personality changes, that some stroke survivors experience.”**



Michelle Bishop

Given the myriad of stressors and the long-term nature of the changes, it is critical that family caregivers find ways to take care of themselves. Although difficult to do, asking a friend, neighbor, or professional to provide an hour or two of respite care every week is important. Scheduling time for pleasant activities, exercise, and relaxation is critical. Getting professional help to problem solve caregiving issues or to help understand and manage thoughts and feelings can be helpful. If the family caregiver does not take care of their own physical and mental health, they could become ill and unable to provide the quantity and quality of care that they want for their loved-one. Thankfully, caregiving also can be incredibly rewarding. To be able to provide those closest to us, the love, support, and care that they need when they are most vulnerable can be very special and truly gratifying.

More information and support services for caregivers are available at:

- National Family Caregivers Association: [www.nfcares.org](http://www.nfcares.org)
- Family Caregiver Alliance: [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)
- National Caregivers Library: [www.caregiverslibrary.org](http://www.caregiverslibrary.org)
- Stroke Caregivers Handbook: [www.strokesafe.org/Caregivers\\_Handbook\\_rev5.pdf](http://www.strokesafe.org/Caregivers_Handbook_rev5.pdf)



**Group members having fun doing the Gator Chomp!**



