

November 2010

Dear First Name,

Your gift is so important because it supports a wide range of in-depth programs and services that are individualized to the needs of the people who request help, regardless of their ability to pay.

As I do each fall, I am asking you to make a generous financial gift to help pay for important programs and services that we provide in southern Wisconsin, as well as contributing to our mission of working to find a cure.

Would you please consider a generous gift to the Alzheimer's & Dementia Alliance this year? Your gift is so important because in a terrible economy, many people have to defer charitable gifts making us even more reliant on loyal supporters such as you.

And since our separation from the National Organization and our reorganization as an independent nonprofit, **please note that every dollar you give stays in Wisconsin!** It is interesting to me that during each of the seven walks this fall, people applauded after this announcement.

My letter is longer than usual due to all of our activity. I am writing about a new community collaboration we are part of, state-wide advocacy efforts, an update on how things are going since our separation from the National Organization, and sharing a letter staff just received.

Your gift is so important because it provides the money to support necessary new collaborations with community nonprofit organizations such as the newly created Dementia Support Team initiated by the Dane County Department of Human Services talking with our staff, Drs. Kim and Gail Petersen, and the South Madison Coalition of the Elderly. You will remember that we are fortunate to have Dr. Kim Petersen, an experienced gerontologist and nationally recognized expert on dementia, as a member of our Board of Directors.

The problem is that frail elders are being admitted to hospitals or psychiatric units due to aggressive behaviors caused by dementia. The purpose of the Support Team is to provide successful reintegration of the person with dementia from a psychiatric facility back into a community facility.

Money is a major concern since residing in a psychiatric facility may cost to a \$1,000 per day and if the person receives public funding, such placement may require a huge expenditure of public dollars. Another concern is hardship on the family when visiting a loved one may become immensely difficult due to the increased distance between the family's location and the psychiatric facility.

This team of experts does a complete review of the individual's medical and life history, diagnosis and medication. Then one of our staff works with facility staff to discuss how to build positive relations with the person with dementia and to find practical solutions to lessen the effects of dementia on the individual's behavior. Finally, a round-the-clock, usually non-drug treatment program is written and followed up by our staff.

We are pleased to be working with Dane County as part of the Dementia Support Team, and we are pleased that they recognized our staff expertise by requesting our help to create the (over, please)

program. Hopefully this experience will be useful to other families and counties facing similar problems.

Your gift is so important because it supports state-wide advocacy on behalf of older citizens and especially those with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. **The Alzheimer Alliance is the only Alzheimer's organization in Wisconsin that maintains a lobbyist as part of its staff, the same person who has worked with us for 13 years.**

We will again need to advocate for two key pieces of the State budget in 2011 – the *Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Support Program* (AFCSP) and funds to support research at the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at UW-Madison. These programs represent, respectively, about \$2 million and \$3 million of the \$57.5 billion, two-year State budget.

AFCSP is a State program where funds are given to each county to support care for people with Alzheimer's in their homes. We are committed to keeping both AFCSP and the ADRC research dollars in the budget, a position that becomes increasing difficult in a poor economy.

Through our efforts, a key piece of legislation to protect dementia patients, known as 2009 Wisconsin Act 281, was signed this year by the Governor. **This legislation requires a nursing home to obtain consent from the patient or guardian before administering psychotropic medication** that has a black box warning against using the medication with a person that has a degenerative brain disorder such as Alzheimer's disease.

This bill was drafted in response to a situation faced by a family in northern Wisconsin. The father had dementia and was residing in a nursing home. In 2007 the father was prescribed the drug Risperdal. The father's health declined dramatically while on Risperdal and after a short period, he passed away because of the inappropriate use of this drug. The FDA had placed a black box warning on this particular medication in 2005.

To change the subject for a moment, I've been asked by many people how things are going since our separation from the National Organization. We disaffiliated from the National Organization because of money. In the past, the National Organization raised money separately from the local chapter and each kept what they raised. A new policy required that all monies raised in our communities be pooled and shared on a 60 local/40 National basis.

Because our chapter monies due to National were formerly based on a dues structure, the new policy meant that the amount that we would send to National increased from \$40,000 to \$120,000 in one year. We would have to cut staff and programs to pay the increase. After more than two years of discussion with the National Organization, the parties mutually agreed our local focus was not compatible with the National's strategic plan.

Unfortunately, the National Organization established a satellite office in Madison using our old name and is aggressively marketing to our donors. We need therefore to make it clear that there are two, competing organizations. We are the Alzheimers & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin - formerly the South Central Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, and we are the organization that has been serving southern Wisconsin for more than 25 years. Every dollar we raise stays in Wisconsin.

Through the 190+ programs we typically present in a year that work directly with people with dementia, families, caregivers and health care professionals, we are an integral part of the community. Even the dollars we provide for cutting edge research remain here in Wisconsin through a long standing relationship with the UW-Madison Alzheimer's Disease Research Center.

We ask our supporters to be aware that there are now two organizations raising money. We all agree that the ultimate goal is a future without Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, but until the cure is found, we must help the people we see every day living with this heartbreaking disease.

Please help us spread the word about our new name and help reduce the confusion with the new organization in town. We cannot afford to lose even one person in our fight against Alzheimer's disease. We especially cannot afford to lose a donor due to confusion with another organization.

I'm going to quote extensively, with permission (names have been changed), from an unsolicited letter that staff recently received which illustrates what we do. I would only add that in addition to being a resource for John's caregivers, John benefited from our *Crossing Bridges* and *Meeting of Minds* programs. He also received help from the *Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Support Program*.

Your gift is so important because it supports a wide range of in-depth programs that are individualized to the needs of the people who request our help, regardless of their ability to pay. **The letter from James and Gregory tells the following story:**

Alzheimer's staff: "Alzheimer's and Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin, how can I help you?"

Me: "I was hoping that I could schedule an appointment to talk to one of your staff about an elderly gentleman I have agreed to help. He was diagnosed with Alzheimer's a few years ago, and I think it is progressing rather quickly. Would someone there be available to talk with me?"

Alzheimer's staff: "Of course!"

"The Alzheimer's Alliance has since then been that friend that never says no, that friend who can be trusted implicitly. We appreciate very much the support and care that they have given us free of charge. Their advice, based on years of both personal and professional experience, has made a real difference in how we handle things on John's behalf. Their staff has been invaluable to us as we have learned to be better advocates for John.

"Our relationship with the Alzheimer's Alliance began with that phone call shortly after our elderly friend, John, asked that we 'help him write a few checks.' He was experiencing 'cognitive impairment,' as he insisted on calling it. John was in a tough situation and needed a trusted friend to be there for him in the good and, unfortunately, the many episodes of bad that awaited him. We were honored to be asked to help, but had only a vague idea of how to go about being useful to someone with dementia issues.

"With the help and guidance of the Alzheimer's Alliance staff, we discovered that our plan to treat John and his situation as if he were our own father was the best one. We learned how to fine tune our 'John speak'—the new language we were learning in order to communicate effectively with John.

As John's capacities rapidly changed, the Alliance taught us how to better frame issues so that they were no longer frightening or scary to John; they demonstrated to us how to reassure him that his feelings were genuine and valuable and that the pain he was experiencing in his heart did not mean that he was alone.

Most importantly, we saw modeled behaviors that allowed us to convey that sense of caring that John needed from us. Sometimes, effective communication means that there just isn't anything that can be said; we just sit near him and give him a hug.

“What has been most precious about the assistance that the Alzheimer’s Alliance has given us is the willingness to meet with us personally, to assist us as new and more challenging situations arise. Each time we have repeated the phone call we made originally, we are greeted with the same response: ‘Of course!’ They have helped us to better understand the pharmacology and the medical decisions we have been asked to make. They have been willing even to work with us to bring a new level of awareness to the staff at John’s new home. The Alzheimer’s Alliance is a full-service organization, helping not only the victims of these terrible afflictions, but also those who support them.

“In short, we don’t know how we would do this for our friend John without our friends at the Alzheimer’s Alliance.”

Sincerely,
James and Gregory

Your gift is so important because it helps guarantee that when people need help -- your loved one, friend, or maybe even you at some future time – expert staff will be here to answer the call. I’m counting on you for a generous financial gift at this special time of year. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Paul Rusk
Executive Director

P.S. Gifts may be made by mailing a check to our office using the enclosed return envelope or through our secure website -- select the Donate blue button on our home page at www.alzwissc.org. For information about a stock gift or planned gift, please contact our office.