

The Wadesboro Lions Club meets at the Papa Joe's Restaurant the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. For more information about these meetings or becoming a member, please call Lion Jim Chandler at 910-571-1448.

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Dementia Caregivers Encouraged to Make Their Health and Wellbeing an Equal Priority

Alzheimer's Association offers help to the 373,000 Alzheimer's caregivers in North Carolina. During National Family Caregivers and National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month in November, the Alzheimer's Association Western Carolina Chapter is encouraging dementia caregivers to make their own health an equal priority as they navigate the demands and stresses of caring for someone else. Currently, there are more than 373,000 caregivers in North Carolina providing care to more than 210,000 living with Alzheimer's disease. "As difficult as it may be, caregivers need to make their health and well-being an equal priority," said Katherine Lambert, CEO, Alzheimer's Association, Western Carolina Chapter. "Maintaining your health can help you be a better caregiver. No caregiver should face this disease alone. The Alzheimer's Association is here to help."

Caring for those living with Alzheimer's or other dementia poses special challenges for family caregivers. As dementia symptoms worsen, caregivers can experience increased emotional stress, depression, anxiety, and new or worsened health problems. In addition, caregivers often experience depleted finances due to disruptions in employment and paying for health care or other services.

"Caring for a person with Alzheimer's takes longer, lasts longer, is more personal and intrusive than most other diseases, and takes a heavy toll on the health of the caregivers themselves," said Lambert. "During the course of the disease, caregiving tasks escalate and become more intensive. As a result, many dementia caregivers neglect their own health needs and that can be a recipe for disaster."

Across the country, 59% of dementia caregivers report high to very high emotional stress due to caregiving and 38% report high to very high physical stress due to caregiving. Seventy-four percent of dementia caregivers report they are "somewhat concerned" to "very concerned" about maintaining their own health since becoming a caregiver. In North Carolina, 67,513 (18.1%) of dementia caregivers report frequent poor physical health.

To help caregivers balance competing priorities while maintaining their overall health and well-being, the Alzheimer's Association offers these tips:

- Find time for yourself. It's normal to need a break from caregiving duties. No one can do it all by themselves. Consider taking advantage of respite care or help from family and friends to spend time doing something you enjoy.
- Become an educated caregiver. Understand the disease, its progression and accompanying behavioral and physical changes. Know resources in your community that can help.
- Build a support network. Organize friends and family who want to help provide care and support. Access local caregiver support groups or online communities, such as ALZConnected, to connect with other caregivers. If stress becomes overwhelming, seek professional help.
- Take care of yourself. Try to eat well, exercise and get plenty of rest. Making sure that you are healthy can help you be a better caregiver.
- Avoid caregiver burnout. Sustained caregiver stress can lead to caregiver burnout – a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion.

The Alzheimer's Association offers Caregiver Stress Check to help caregivers identify and avoid caregiver burnout.

- Accept changes. Eventually your loved one will need more intensive kinds of care. Research care options now so you are ready for the changes as they occur.
- Know you're doing your best. It's normal to lose patience or feel like your care may fall short sometimes. You're doing the best you can. For support and encouragement, consider joining an online or in-person support group.

"It's important that dementia caregivers not isolate themselves," said Lambert. "Connecting with other caregivers and support organizations can help you find the information, resources and emotional support needed to help stay physically and emotionally strong so you can take care of yourself while you provide care to others. In the end, taking care of yourself so you can be a better caregiver is really a gift to the person you are caring for."

The Alzheimer's Association Chapters in North Carolina offers free education programs and support groups to help all area caregivers and their families. During National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month and National Family Caregivers Month, our featured programs in November include:

- **Caregiving During the Holidays** - For many caregivers the holiday season gives rise to stress, frustration and anger, instead of peace and goodwill. This program is designed to teach caregivers to care for themselves, their loved ones, and about holiday safety all while giving suggestions that may make the holidays more enjoyable for you and your loved ones.

- November 6 | 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. | Hamlet
- November 6 | 2 - 3 p.m. | Hickory
- November 7 | 6 - 7 p.m. | Pineville
- November 12 | 11 - 2 p.m. | Lexington
- November 16 | 2 - 3 p.m. | live webinar

- **The Empowered CaregiverSeries** - This education series teaches caregivers how to navigate the responsibilities of caring for someone living with dementia. Topics include tips for understanding key aspects of caregiving, supporting independence, communicating effectively, responding to dementia-related behaviors and exploring care and support services.

- Part 1: Building Foundations and Supporting Independence | November 11 | 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. | Newton
- Part 2: Communicating Effectively, Managing Behaviors and Exploring Care Services | November 18 | 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. | Newton

- **Creative Caregiving: Holiday Arts & Crafts for Alzheimer's Support** | November 23 | 10:30 a.m. - 1:45 p.m. | Charlotte - Join us to learn about tips for reducing stress associated with the holidays and caring for the caregiver. Activities include lunch and craft therapy. Care partners, caregivers, loved ones, family and friends of all ages welcomed. This program is being provided in partnership with the caregiving-centric organization, Frankie Mae Foundation.

All programs are free, but pre-registration is required. For a complete list of programs, support groups, or to register for upcoming programs, visit: act.alz.org/ncmonthlyprograms or call 800-272-3900.

The Alzheimer's Association provides local support and programs to families facing this devastating disease, including a 24-7 Helpline staffed by master's level clinicians and specialists who are available 365 days a year and can help families navigate a variety of disease-related issues. Call 800-272-3900.

Alzheimer's Caregiving: By the numbers

- More than 11 million people in the U.S. are providing unpaid care to a person living with Alzheimer's or dementia.
- In 2023, these caregivers provided an estimated 18.4 billion hours of unpaid care valued at \$346.6 billion.
- 83% of the help provided to older adults in the U.S. comes from family members, friends or other unpaid caregivers.
- Nearly half of all caregivers (48%) who provide help to older adults do so for someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia.
- Among primary caregivers of people with dementia, over half take care of their parents.
- Approximately two-thirds of caregivers are women, and one-third of dementia caregivers are daughters.
- Approximately one-quarter of dementia caregivers are "sandwich generation" caregivers, meaning they care not only for an aging parent, but also for children under age 18.
- The total lifetime cost of care for a person living with dementia is estimated at almost \$400,000 (\$394,683) with 70% of these costs borne by family caregivers in the forms of unpaid caregiving and out-of-pocket expenses.

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