



A LOCAL Organization Helping LOCAL Families

The Alzheimer's Update

Fall 2017

The "Art" of Caregiving



It has often been said that Alzheimer's care is more art than science. Nothing is exact. No solution works all the time. If you stop to consider the "art" of your caregiving, what colors most influence the emotional background of your life? Fall's bright flashes of color represent the full range of emotions that caregivers experience.

WHITE Denial colors the landscape for many caregivers like a white blanket. Some family members see only what they want to see. Denial can save you the heartache that comes with acceptance, but the price is that you never learn to effectively care for your loved one. In the end, denial doesn't really spare your feelings – it can compound your problems and it can be paralyzing.

YELLOW There can be such a warm feeling of tenderness when you connect with your loved one. We can't always figure out what they are trying to say or even why they do some of the things they do, but as we struggle to journey alongside our loved one, there are times when there is a flicker of recognition, a spark of their old sense of humor, a place where you connect and communicate. Cherish those warm, yellow moments.

ORANGE The caregiver who appreciates the value of maintaining their sense of humor is the caregiver who will survive! There are opportunities to smile and laugh every day. But that is just what they are – opportunities. Nothing can make you happy if you won't even smile. Open yourself up to the possibilities for humor and laughter that still exist in your life. Humor is the best medicine – let it heal you!

RED You wouldn't be human if this disease didn't make you mad enough to see red, at least occasionally. Caregivers often get angry at the disease, which can spill over into anger at our loved one, and our friends and family. And it is OK to get angry, but you have to find an appropriate outlet for your anger. Getting mad at your loved one confuses and upsets them further. Getting angry with family and friends may push them further away. Give yourself permission to let off steam by finding some respite and time just for you.

GREEN Left unchecked, resentment grows like a weed until it chokes out all joy. Years ago a support group member said she took all of her resentment towards her sisters who didn't help with their mother and laid it

on the altar for God. She said, "Unfortunately, it followed me back down the aisle". It can be impossible to get rid of our resentment because it is easier to forgive than to forget. Don't let every new hurt compound the last hurt.

BLUE Grief will be your constant companion as you travel alongside your loved one, watching them change little by little. Grief makes the journey perilous. We don't get our way. We don't get what we ask for. You do have a choice though: rejoice for what you have had or be bitter over what is lost.

PURPLE Every caregiver should wear a proud badge of honor. You make sacrifices that go unnoticed. You put your loved one's needs ahead of your own. You safeguard their dignity. You muster all your courage to provide care every day. Caregivers are valiant heroes.

Stop and consider what colors define your feelings. Josh Billings once said, "Life is the art of drawing without an eraser." While that may be true, love and forgiveness are essentially the best erasers of vivid anger, grief, and resentment. What colors and emotions do you need to add to the tapestry of your life?

What's in Your Dementia Tool Box?

The most successful caregivers learn early on to use a "tool box" approach to solving the challenges of dementia care. You need many tools, tricks, and techniques to help calm and soothe your loved one whenever they become restless or agitated. Accept that nothing works all the time. Don't get discouraged or frustrated. Instead pack your tool box with lots of options to try. Here are a few ideas:

Nothing soothes the soul like familiar music. This summer ACA provided 80 headphones and ipods filled with personalized music for patients on our service programs. Music sparks memory and connection. This is



part of a national movement that recognizes how music reaches patients like nothing else. Unfortunately, Apple has discontinued the mini ipods we were offering. If you have an ipod you no longer use, consider donating it to ACA. We will fill it with music to give along with headphones to a deserving patient.

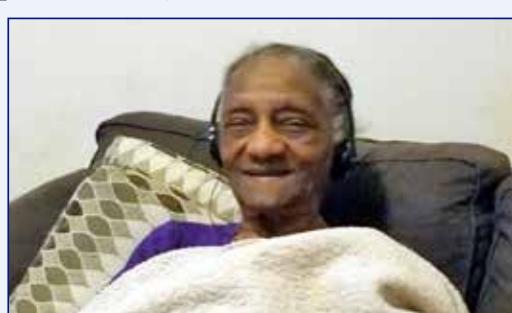
For years, dolls have been used to comfort dementia patients and give them a sense of purpose. Today, many caregivers are delighted to find the Hasbro's Joy for All dog and cat. For about \$100, they bark or purr, wag their tail or roll over so you can rub their belly. They are the perfect companion to give your loved one the emotional connection they crave. We have even found a \$20 *Pete the Repeat Parrot* that entertains and brings much joy. Look on Amazon for these and other products.

As the disease progresses, many patients crave tactile stimulation.

Fidget blankets offer a lap covering with different fabrics and textures to rub and simple activities to engage. Look on Amazon or The Alzheimer's Store at alzstore.com. ACA will be providing fidget blankets made by two members of the Mount Hebron Baptist Church located in Leeds in our holiday care baskets that will be delivered over the holidays to many deserving families we serve.



These suggestions for your tool box reinforce a sense of familiarity and can engage your loved one in a way that diminishes the isolation and loneliness they often feel. Don't forget to pack your tool box with knowledge about the disease and education about how to best respond.



alzca.org



205.871.7970 or 866.806.7255

facebook.com/alzca



Alzheimer's of Central Alabama



TACKLE Alzheimer's

Walking to Remember 2017

**Saturday, November 4,
inside the Riverchase Galleria, 8 am**

**Ask family, friends, and coworkers to walk in honor
or memory of a loved one
Register (205) 871-7970
or www.alzca.org/walking**



Lights Out For Alzheimer's

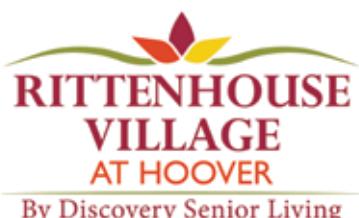
Friday, November 3

A special post Halloween night at Atrox Factory where you will tour with a glow stick as your only source of light. For more information visit AtroxFactory.com

Our 2017 Corporate Sponsors



An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association



Alzheimer's of
Central Alabama

Post Office Box 2273
Birmingham, Alabama 35201-2273
(205) 871-7970
www.alzca.org

Non-profit org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1564
Birmingham, AL

Located at:
300 Office Park Drive, Suite 225
Birmingham, Alabama 35223

November is National Alzheimer's Awareness Month

Alzheimer's Disease Prayer

Sunday, November 12, 2017, is the Day of Prayer for our loved ones, family members, providers, and all who seek better care and treatment.

Dear Lord,

For the many persons who have died from Alzheimer's Disease, we pray that they are in the care of your loving arms.

For those who are now Alzheimer's Disease patients, we pray for their dignity and comfort.

For those who are caregivers, we pray for understanding, compassion and patience.

For families touched by Alzheimer's Disease, we pray for strength and courage.

For those who seek the cause, cure, prevention, and treatment of Alzheimer's Disease, we pray for your wisdom, guidance, and direction.

What a solace it is to know that You know our heartaches and our frustrations, our joys at those moments of clarity and recognition, and our anticipation of medical discoveries. But, most importantly, each of us receives peace from awareness that Your eye is on us and that it is Your hand that gently soothes us and is extended to uplift us.

For being our refuge and for the Hope You have given us...Our Thanks.

Amen

ALZHEIMER'S OF CENTRAL ALABAMA 2018 Calendar

Reflections From Our Muse



"Just Me" by Mary
Mary discovered her passion for painting after her children were grown. She began painting when she moved to her adult living unit and continued to paint periodically at 91. She loved working with color, which is evident in this lovely piece that was featured on our Garden Art Party invitation in 2005.

We discovered a rare and delightful bonus on the reverse side of the painting. She had faintly sketched her concept of this piece and titled it "Just Me."

Reflections from Our Muse 2018 Calendar

If every art form has a muse, Donna Lott is the muse of Alzheimer's art in Alabama, mainly through her work in adult day care centers. We are proud to offer this retrospective look at some of the artwork Donna has helped inspire while caring for Alabama's dementia population for over 25 years.

Receive a calendar for a \$10 online donation: www.alzca.org/calendar.



alzca.org



205.871.7970 or 866.806.7255



facebook.com/alzca