



A Local Organization Helping Local Families

Fall 2020

# An Update on ACA's COVID Response

AS A GLOBAL PANDEMIC SWIRLS AROUND US, ACA DEVELOPS NEW WAYS TO HELP.

Alzheimer's of  
Central Alabama

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, ACA had a full schedule of activities and fundraisers planned for 2020. And as many of us found, plans, schedules and hard work were upended. Despite the uncertainties we all have faced over the past 7 months, Alzheimer's of Central Alabama remains strong. Our strength is derived from 29 years of amazing community support that has built ACA into a strong, independent, local, nonprofit organization.

ACA has a long history of providing services that help families care for their loved one with dementia at home. Our 3 services programs dovetail the disease progression. For people needing supervision because they are at risk of wandering, ACA offers Project Lifesaver bracelets that admit a unique radio tracking signal. For people who can benefit from a day of laughter, fun, and appropriate stimulation, and for families who need a break, ACA offers scholarships for adult day care. For those who cannot afford continence care, ACA provides a case of products delivered monthly to the door.

Each of our programs has faced COVID-related challenges. In Jefferson County, a moratorium was placed on Project Lifesaver because the Sheriff's resources were needed elsewhere. The adult day care centers were shuttered, and they continue to remain mostly closed. Supplies ran short for gloves and wipes for our families needing continence care. Many of our families looked to ACA to provide masks, which health experts tell us are the number one tool for fighting COVID. Isolation and loneliness were pervasive for the 278 families on our programs. Despite these challenges, our mission continues in new and profound ways.

***To combat boredom and isolation, ACA offered our families a robotic cat or dog in partnership with the Hospice and Home Health Fund of Alabama.***



ACA client Lucy enjoying her robotic pet.

Our first response was to provide food and monetary aid to our families impacted by the pandemic. From our last survey, 30% of the people on day care scholarships have reported incomes of less than \$1,000 a month and 62% less than \$1,500 a month. Of the families receiving continence products, 45% have monthly incomes of \$1,000 or less and 70% have monthly incomes that are less than \$1,500.

ACA put together Emergency Medical Kits that included almost 6,000 masks, along with hand sanitizer, lotion, Band-Aids, and Neosporin. They were delivered to 237 families in 19 Alabama counties, including 164 in Jefferson County. We had 63 volunteers making deliveries, including many from Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church. The church also provided 100 fanciful, handmade fidget blankets that many caregivers use to calm and engage their often anxious loved one.

When supplies of continence products, gloves, and wipes became available, ACA initiated a COVID rapid response program and offered a 2-month supply of products to any family in need. This provided immediate help, giving time for completion of the usual application process. We also began shipping products to those wearing a Project Lifesaver bracelet and those who had attended adult day care and expressed a need.

With funds that typically provide adult day care scholarships, ACA has begun to ship a case nutritional supplements (Ensure) every month to 75 families who requested it. We are excited to establish this new service, and we plan to continue it post COVID because the need is so great.

In-home respite is being provided to families who once attended adult day care on an ACA scholarship. We stand by the day care centers and ACA is fully prepared to fund these scholarships once the centers are able to safely reopen.

To combat boredom and isolation, ACA offered our families a robotic cat or dog in partnership with the Hospice and Home Health Fund of Alabama. We have been amazed by the response. Visit ACA's website to see a short video of Esther and her kitty or google Joy For All to learn more. These furry robotic pets respond in very lifelike ways and bring laughter and joy to the whole family. ACA is supplying some of our families with weekly activity packets in partnership with the Founder's Place, a respite ministry of St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

Despite losing 122 people living with Alzheimer's on our service programs so far this year, ACA is serving more families than ever. 294 families in 19 Alabama counties are touched by ACA in one of these profound ways each month.

## RESEARCH UPDATE & FUNDRAISER

The Junior Board, established in 2015, has attracted a dynamic group of young people who are ambitiously raising money with the goal of recruiting the brightest, most promising students to establish careers in Alzheimer's research. The Board has made a 3-year, \$100,000 commitment (from 2019 through 2021) to UAB's Department of Neurology to establish the ACA Pre-Doctoral Scholars Program in Alzheimer's Research.

**Nolwazi Gcwensa**, our 2020 - 2021 Scholar, will be working in Laura Volpicelli's lab in the Department of Neurology.



Nolwazi's project will determine how Lewy pathology could contribute to loss of synapses in the amygdala, neuronal dysfunction, and how blocking immune cell activation in the brain may prevent synapse loss. Over 50% of Alzheimer's Disease patients have Lewy pathology, in addition to plaques and tangles, in the brain. Lewy pathology, which is associated with more severe symptoms of dementia and shorter lifespan, is found in the amygdala and may contribute to psychiatric symptoms in Alzheimer's patients such as anxiety and fear.

**Ashleigh Irwin** continues her work as our 2019 - 2020 Scholar in the Medical Scientist Training Program (MD/PhD), in Farah Lubin's lab in the Department of Neurobiology. Ashleigh is focused on understanding how specialized cells in the brain called astrocytes work to maintain memories.



## Save the Date:

**ACA's Jr. Board's Toasting Research:  
an Educational Happy Hour,  
A Virtual Event.**

Monday, November 16  
5:30 – 6:30 pm CT.



alzca.org



205.871.7970 or 866.806.7255



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# Alzheimer's of Central Alabama

## Alzheimer's Walk

Sunday Nov. 1 - Saturday Nov. 7

Walking to Remember 2020

**move**  
for your memories

(205) 871-7970 or [alzca.org/walking](http://alzca.org/walking)

Alzheimer's of Central Alabama

## Walking to Remember

Register (205) 871-7970 or  
[www.alzca.org/walking](http://www.alzca.org/walking)

### Alzheimer's Disease Prayer

Sunday, November 8, 2020, 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

Warren  
Averett  
ASSET MANAGEMENT

Visiting Angels  
LIVING ASSISTANCE SERVICES

SYNOVUS  
the bank of here

Kirkwood  
by the River

Home Instead  
SENIOR CARE  
To us, it's personal

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a grand view of life.

ComfortCare

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# Move for Your Memories, 1st Week in November

Alzheimer's of Central Alabama's annual Walking to Remember event will be a weeklong celebration of Brain Health. The first week in November get out and get moving! It can be a walk, run, hike, ride, swim, skip, jog, dance, stroll, stretch—you name it!

Plan to get MOVING anytime from Sunday, Nov. 1 through Saturday, Nov. 7.

Register online at [alzca.org/walking](http://alzca.org/walking). This is a FUNdraiser! Help ACA continue to fulfill our mission of offering services, providing education and supporting research.

You can turn your tax-deductible donation in early and pick up your t-shirt curbside or join us Saturday November 7, for a Drive Through celebration, from 10 until noon.

It's the perfect time to drop off donations, gather t-shirts and register for door prizes.

Receive a short-sleeved shirt with your \$50 donation or a long-sleeved shirt for a \$75 donation. All t-shirts are Comfort Color, 100% cotton, and will be available while supplies last.

### Here's Why You Should Move for Your Memories:

- Researchers found exercisers were up to 28% less likely to develop any type of dementia and 45% less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease specifically.
- Studies suggest that physical activity—even at low-to-moderate levels—cuts your risk of cognitive decline by more than a third.
- 40% of dementia cases could be prevented or delayed by targeting 12 risk factors throughout life - inactivity is one of those risk factors!

Walking to  
Remember 2020  
**move**  
for your memories

JOIN US SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7  
FROM 10 TO NOON, FOR  
A DRIVE THROUGH CELEBRATION.  
Drive by or stroll the ACA parking lot and drop off donations, pick up your Walk t-shirts and enjoy food, fun, vendors, and music! You may also turn in your tax deductible donation prior to this event and pick up your shirts curbside.  
Just like our Walk logo, **masks are required.**



[alzca.org](http://alzca.org)



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