



Issue #5 | Fall 2016

Welcome to **Georgia Interfaith Aging Action**, a quarterly e-newsletter for faith communities, featuring aging program news, current volunteer opportunities, training and resources, and inspiring best practices from the field. Together, we'll explore topics such as how to identify aging needs in your congregation, ways for your faith community to fight senior hunger, how your members can get the most from Medicare, how to start or expand a nursing home visitation program, and much more.



Georgia Interfaith Aging Action is an outgrowth of the Department of Human Services' [Faith and Community Alliance](#). This rapidly growing statewide initiative gives faith-based organizations tools and information for serving congregations and surrounding communities in areas such as aging services, children and vulnerable families, parental responsibility, fatherhood and child support, mental health, and community reentry.

This Quarter's Issue

Discover how you can support community members with Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia.

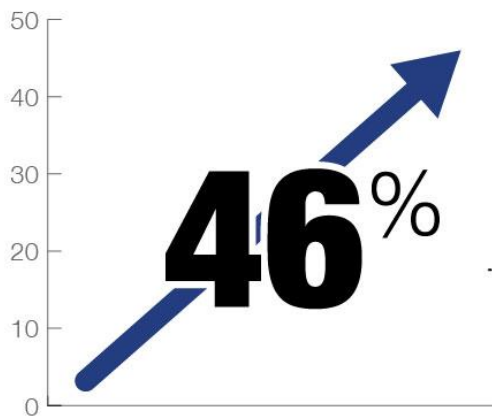
We thank this issue's guest contributor: Victoria Helmly, Georgia Alzheimer's and Related Dementias State Plan Coordinator (Victoria.Helmly@dhs.ga.gov).

Facts About Dementia

The Basics:

- Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. There are several other types of dementia including vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia, and dementia with Lewy bodies.
- Alzheimer's disease and other dementias can affect more than just someone's memory. They can affect mood, behavior, appetite, concentration, and more.
- Currently, there is no way to prevent, slow the progression of, or cure Alzheimer's disease.
- No single test can diagnose Alzheimer's disease, however a combination of assessments and testing can allow a medical professional to make an almost certain diagnosis.

In Georgia:



The number of Georgians with Alzheimers is expected to increase by 46 percent by 2025.



In 2015, Georgia caregivers provided 584 million hours of unpaid care to people with dementia.



That care is valued at \$7.16 billion.

- According to data from 2011, many Georgians are experiencing memory problems but have not talked to their healthcare provider about it.

Action Opportunities

- **Join the Purple Sunday/Sabbath initiative.**
 - The Alzheimer's Association® invites faith organizations to join them in the fight against Alzheimer's disease. By getting involved, communities are helping to educate members about Alzheimer's, the nation's sixth-leading cause of death, while showing support for those facing the disease. The Alzheimer's Association asks faith organizations to select a Sunday during National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month in November and encourage members to wear purple, the color of Alzheimer's awareness. Your support makes a difference in the fight against Alzheimer's.

- Contact Mia Chester at mchester@alz.org for more about the Purple Sunday campaign.

- **Use social media.**

- If your faith community or congregation is active on social media, this is a simple, high-impact way to engage with others about dementia. Share facts and warning signs, list resources, promote educational opportunities, or recruit volunteers through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media outlets. You can start by following dementia-related organizations such as the Alzheimer's Association, the Alzheimer's and Related Dementias Research Center at Emory University, the Dementia Action Alliance, and others. You can keep informed of what they are doing and "repost" pertinent information.
 - Alzheimer's Association – Georgia
Chapter: <http://www.alz.org/georgia/>
 - Emory Alzheimer's Disease Research Center: <http://alzheimers.emory.edu/>
 - Dementia Action Alliance:
<http://daanow.org/>

- **Start a support group.**

- Many faith communities have members or staff who are equipped to lead support groups for caregivers who may be in need of reassurance, resources, and someone to listen. Ask around your congregation or faith community and see if there is a need, then offer one meeting to gather input and recruit a leadership team. Contact your local Alzheimer's Association office or Area Agency on Aging for help.
- [Starting and Running a Caregiver Support Group](#) (Caregiver.com)
- [Support Group Toolkit](#) (Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.)

- **Offer respite to caregivers.**

- People caring for a loved one with dementia can become overwhelmed

and stressed and need some time “off” to rest, run errands, work, visit family or friends, or take time away. Respite services provide caregivers with a break, whether it’s for a few hours, a day, or longer. Learn about one Georgia faith community’s growing respite program at the end of this issue, and discover tools to help your congregation establish its own program. See “Inspiration from the Field: The Grace Arbor Story.”

- [Resources to Establish and Sustain Volunteer Respite Programs](#) (Administration on Aging)
- [Providing Breaks for Family Caregivers: A Toolkit for Volunteers and Faith](#) (Alabama Lifespan Respite Resource Network)

What Faith Communities are Doing

Looking for ideas? Review this sampling of Georgia’s faith-based 2016 activities to support people living with dementia. Tell us about your group’s efforts to promote dementia awareness and improve care. We’ll feature you on the DHS Division of Aging Services’ website. Write CynthiaHaley.Dunn@dhs.ga.gov.

Support Groups:

- [Duluth First United Methodist Church](#)
- [First Presbyterian Church of Gainesville](#)
- [Temple Emanu-El](#)

Sermons:

- [Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta](#)
“A Spiritual Perspective on Alzheimer’s” – April 2016

Presentations and Panel Discussions:

- [Ben Hill United Methodist Church](#)
Ongoing brain health programming (Contact: Sandra Cummings)
- [Ebenezer Baptist Church](#)
“Dementia Care and Resources” – July 2016 Resources July 23

- [St. Benedict the Moor Catholic Church](#)

Signs and Symptoms, Types and Causes, Stories of Coastal Residents – July 2016

Caregiver Training:

- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

Fifteen chapters of Metro Atlanta AKA have completed caregiver education training with the Alzheimer's Association to establish caregiver support groups in their chapter communities. The support groups will be held in faith communities.

(Contact Dr. Joy Jackson Guilford with the [Chi Tau Omega Chapter](#).)

- [Antioch Baptist Church North](#)

Trainings on Sept. 17 and Nov. 6, 2016

Special Activities:

- [Cascade United Methodist Church](#)

Hosts of the Emory Brain Health Forum and “Forget Me Not” play – January 2016

Studying the feasibility of an on-site adult daycare program

Inspiration from the Field: The Grace Arbor Story

Grace Arbor is a respite program offered through First United Methodist Church of Lawrenceville. It was launched almost 12 years ago in response to a persistently expressed need by the church community for quality care for their senior, memory-impaired loved ones. After four years of consideration, the church agreed to invest the funds to support this outreach ministry for the church and community.



From the time the director was hired until Grace Arbor's opening six weeks later, the

church received input from future volunteers and caregivers to help create the actual programming. The director's additional training in Alzheimer's care and Montessori Method for Dementia patients, art therapy and a certificate in Professional Gerontology, plus her experience in Stephen Ministry, has elevated this program into a dynamic and recommended program throughout the State of Georgia. The director also serves as a valued consultant and mentor for communities launching similar programs. Following the recruitment of approximately 20 volunteers, the Georgia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association conducted an initial training in behaviors, communication and an overall understanding of the disease for the core volunteers.

"As I have walked beside caregivers and people who have dementia over the past eleven years, I have seen the extreme need to be noticed, validated and supported as well as the need for qualified resources for caregivers," said Robin Dill, director of Grace Arbor. "Caregiving is a lonely journey and a respite like Grace Arbor can give hope, comfort, support, and a much needed physical break. For the person with dementia, it can give much needed stimulation and friendship that friends and family may be unable or unequipped to give."

Grace Arbor's governing board, the Congregational Care Committee, is volunteer-based. The board consists of caregivers who have had loved ones in the program, as well as volunteers and members of the church. Many of the committee members have extensive medical and educational experience and training. The board meets semi-monthly to provide counsel and support to the ministry.



Since its inception, Grace Arbor has grown from a two-day-per-week program to three days within the first year; in the second year it expanded to four days per week. The paid staff roster has increased to include a part-time assistant director and a part-time food service employee. Volunteer staffing has grown as the number of participants has increased, creating a ratio of two staff/volunteers to each participant.

Volunteer duties range from assisting in program setup to serving alongside participants in the five hours the center is open each day. Piano players willingly share their gifts by providing music for devotions or afternoon sing-alongs. Other volunteers help with refreshments for special events or provide the computer skills for placemats and name place cards. In everything they do, they are sharing their gifts and talents.

To provide support to caregivers as well as volunteers, leaders added two support groups – one in the first month and another in the first year. Each group fills a need for a confidential place to honestly share feelings.

Learn more by visiting First United Methodist Church of Lawrenceville at www.fumclv.org.

About the Article's Author:

Robin Dill, the founder and director of Grace Arbor, wrote a book entitled *Walking with Grace* to help congregations begin respite programs like Grace Arbor. It is available on Amazon for purchase.

Dates to Remember

Do you need related newsletter and bulletin content, program ideas, and discussion topics for groups? Plan ahead for these key dates:

October: National Lewy Body Dementia Awareness Month

Lewy Body Dementia Association – www.lbda.org

October: National Long-Term Care Residents Rights' Month

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care – www.TheConsumerVoice.org

November: National Family Caregivers Month

Caregiver Action Network – www.nfcacares.org

November: National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month

Alzheimer's Association – www.alz.org/care/honor-caregiverf.asp

December 1: Third Annual Alzheimer's Advocacy Institute

Alzheimer's Association, Georgia Chapter – www.alz.org/georgia/

Call for Stories

Readers, please share your success stories with us! In each issue, Georgia Interfaith Aging Action will feature faith-based communities making a difference in the lives of older Georgians. Let's hear from you! Write the Division of Aging Services' Community Affairs Manager at CynthiaHaley.Dunn@dhs.ga.gov or call 404-657-1515.

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