

AFA Quilt to Remember to Touch Heart of America

As an inspirational monument to all those touched by Alzheimer's disease and related illnesses, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) recently unveiled plans to create the first-of-its-kind national dementia-related quilt—the AFA Quilt to Remember.

The thought-provoking quilt, patterned after the world famous AIDS Memorial Quilt, will be grand in scale and continually expand in size with ongoing contributions for years to come.

Individuals and organizations are invited to creatively design large panels to memorialize individuals who have either passed from or are living with dementia, and honor family caregivers and other family members as well as healthcare professionals committed to the cause.

"The AFA Quilt to Remember will be brought to the heart of America. Piece by piece, it will help our nation recognize the reality and the enormity of this disease, and affirm that we stand united

for optimal care and a cure," said Eric J. Hall, AFA's chief executive officer.

Panels designed by individuals will be four feet by four feet and those produced by organizations will be eight feet by eight feet.

Alzheimer's Foundation of America



The public was immediately touched by the announcement. Within one week, nearly 50 applications spanning the country were already in-house.

Among the first to express interest, Vanessa Beam of Mineral Wells, W. VA said she could not wait to "get cracking" on creating a panel to memorialize her late grandmother.

"Alzheimer's has made its mark on my family, and I think this quilt will be a great way to remember those who have suffered with Alzheimer's and those who have loved and cared for them along the way," said Beam, who happens to be a quilter.

Diane Vinyard of Olathe, KS will honor her mother, Dolores Close, with her contribution. The panel "will convey a mom reaching for memories and lost loved ones," she said.

Noted Vinyard: "I don't want her to die without others knowing who she was and how she struggled."

Organizations are also stepping up. Somerford Corp., Gaithersburg, MD, has received commitments from all of

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AFA Nets National Accolades

AFA proudly received high-powered national recognition recently for its efforts to improve the lives of Americans.

In a November 16 letter from The White House, President George W. Bush commended AFA for its contributions to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina.


"Our Nation is grateful to all those who are helping their fellow citizens in need...The good works of [the] Alzheimer's Foundation of America demonstrate the character and great strength of our Nation," President Bush wrote.

The President was referring to AFA's immediate offer in the wake of Hurricane Katrina to help emergency relief efforts and provide emotional and financial resources to its member organizations, and residents and displaced disaster victims who were also coping with Alzheimer's disease.

In addition, on November 15, United States Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) issued a statement in support of AFA's National Memory Screening Day initiative, which was taking place that day.

"In recognition of Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month, I am

proud to support National Memory Screening Day on November 15, sponsored by the Alzheimer's Foundation of America in my home state of New York. AFA has spearheaded this event annually since 2003 to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease and the significance of early detection," her statement said in part.

Senator Clinton called National Memory Screening Day "an important first step" in the process of early detection, and urged New Yorkers and Americans throughout the country to "take advantage of these beneficial screenings." 



Chairman's Column

Why did you become involved with the Alzheimer's Foundation of America?" I can't tell you how often people ask me that question. The answer is simple: my mom.

At first, my mother was confused, misused words and misplaced things.

The disease took away her memory and her abilities more and more each day. I recall after my father's funeral how my mother kept asking me over and over again where my dad was because she wanted him to join the party. Just imagine the emotional turmoil I felt.

For ten years, my family watched my mother decline deeper and deeper as a result of Alzheimer's disease. We were determined to provide the best possible care for her, and we were lucky enough to have the resources to do so and to keep her living independently with assistance and in close proximity to my home. To call the experience heartbreaking is an understatement, as anyone who has experienced this disease understands all too well.

Who knows if I would have adopted Alzheimer's disease as one of my charitable causes if not for this personal experience; who knows how many others committed to this cause would have gotten involved otherwise.


Having gone through this, it didn't take much to realize that the disease is much bigger than my family. About a decade after Mom's death in 1992, the opportunity arose for me to get involved on a larger scale. The nation was crying out for a national organization such as AFA that would focus on the care needs of millions of Americans.

As an entrepreneur my entire adult life, I've known that visions can develop into organizations larger than ever imagined. AFA has accomplished this, becoming truly successful in a brief period of time. It is driven by enormous need, guided by passionate trustees and staff, and bolstered by dedicated member organizations in nearly all 50 states. Through calls to AFA's hotline, emails, Web site visits, magazine readership, conferences, and other encounters, AFA touches the lives of tens of thousands of people each month. We are truly caring for families that are living through what my family lived through.

Today, the magnitude of Alzheimer's disease is too great to just let personal involvement be the only motivating factor for participation. The opportunity exists to make a difference—as a volunteer, a donor, a panel maker for our new AFA Quilt to Remember or in some other capacity, big or small. My hope for the new year is that even more Americans, whether touched by this devastating disease or not, will embrace our cause and get involved.

Bert Brodsky

AFA Rings NASDAQ

In recognition of National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month, AFA presided over the closing bell of The NASDAQ Stock Market on November 4. Eric J. Hall, AFA's chief executive officer, did the honors, surrounded by AFA board members, advisory board members, staff, guests, and NASDAQ officials. Outside, AFA's name and logo flashed on NASDAQ's electronic display that soars seven-stories high at Times Square in midtown Manhattan. 



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Bringing Communities Together for Memory Care

Balancing AFA's National Memory Screening Day held each fall, AFA is introducing an awareness-raising and educational initiative called Memory Care Connection for the spring season.


Slated for May 6 and 7, Memory Care Connection will involve houses of worship and senior centers across the United States "to bring communities together for memory care."

AFA's goal is to tap into these familiar and trusted community settings to encourage the public to learn more about dementia, caregiving strategies, techniques for successful aging, and community resources. In addition, participating sites may also choose to offer free, confidential memory screenings.

The new event comes at a time when more and more Americans, especially aging baby boomers, are concerned about brain health.

Memory Care Connection is being presented with an unrestricted educational grant from Forest Pharmaceuticals. It falls under AFA's "Together for Care" campaign, rolled out last fall to challenge individuals, community groups, schools, businesses, and organizations to "come together, collaborate and care."

Like it does for National Memory Screening Day, AFA will provide participating sites with educational brochures, marketing tools and other materials to seamlessly carry out the event.

For more information and to sign up as a participating site, visit www.togetherforcare.org or call AFA (toll-free) at 866-AFA-8484. 

Memory Screening Day Draws Crowds

Approximately 20,000 Americans took advantage of free memory screenings and walked away armed with educational materials about Alzheimer's disease and successful aging on AFA's National Memory Screening Day on November 15.

The third annual event was the biggest yet, with nearly 700 sites participating in almost all 50 states.

Among those who were screened, an estimated ten percent had below-normal scores, according to input from participating organizations. These individuals received counseling from social workers or other mental health professionals on the spot and were encouraged to follow up with a qualified healthcare professional for a complete medical examination.

Eric J. Hall, AFA's chief executive officer, said the feedback suggests that National Memory Screening Day is doing what it was intended to do: alert individuals with memory problems that further evaluation is necessary, and allay the concerns of those with normal scores.

"We are capturing people who otherwise might have been overlooked. If

National Memory Screening Day drives individuals to doctors' offices and results in early detection, we are taking a giant step toward improved quality of life," Hall said.

For those with normal scores, the most commonly used words of the day were "relief" and "reassurance," according to screening facilitators.

"Now I can quit worrying so much. That helps a lot," said one participant in Portland, OR.

AFA introduced National Memory Screening Day in 2003 to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease and related illnesses, and to stress the importance of early detection and proper diagnosis. The urgency results, in part, from statistics showing that 50 percent to 66 percent of people with dementia never received a diagnosis of dementia from a clinician. Earlier diagnosis can lead to more effective medical treatments, community support and long-term planning.


Word about the event has been spreading each year. This past November, sites included local Alzheimer's organizations, long-term

care facilities, senior centers, private doctors' offices, universities, and hospitals. In addition, there were some new types of venues this year: for example, on board were more than 27 Kmart pharmacies in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and MetLife and Ridgewood Savings Bank offered screenings at the bank's home office and one branch in Queens, NY.

Visiting Angels in Silver Spring, MD had so much interest in advance that it added two additional days of screenings with assistance from a local nursing home. Jewish Family Service of Tidewater, Norfolk, VA, saw more than 70 people, marking the largest attendance of any event it has ever held. And AARP Alabama-Huntsville processed 32 people in three hours at a Publix supermarket.

"I could not have been happier," said an AARP spokesperson, Ray Holton.

National Memory Screening Day was supported by Forest Pharmaceuticals, the premier sponsor, and Ortho-McNeil Neurologics, the presenting sponsor.

Organizations are already signing up for next year's National Memory Screening Day—November 14, 2006. 

Skating Stars Will Perform in AFA Event


Morgan Matthews, a champion skater and U.S. Olympic Team alternate, is championing AFA's cause, and in that role will take to the ice for a special fundraising performance on March 12 in Washington, DC.

The event, called Skate from the Heart, will immediately follow an action-packed ice hockey game that pits the Washington Capitals against the Ottawa Senators at the MCI Center.

Matthews and her partner, Maxim Zavozin, who placed fourth overall in ice dance at the recent U.S. Figure Skating Championship, and other skating stars will perform in the one-hour show. A portion of specially-priced tickets will benefit AFA.

Matthews, 18, proposed Skate from the Heart as a way to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease after watching her grandmother's struggle with the brain disorder.

"I wanted to offer my own talents to help create an event that is a tribute to people with Alzheimer's disease and their families, recognizing them for all that they do and the challenges they face," Matthews said.

She also recently joined the advisory board of AFA Teens, AFA's division to educate and engage teenagers, and penned an article about her family's experience in the fall 2005 issue of AFA's magazine, care *AD*antage™. 



▲ Ice dance champions Morgan Matthews and Maxim Zavozin

Innovative Programs Sought for Brodsky Grant

In its ongoing quest for innovative programs that define optimal dementia care, AFA announced that it is now accepting applications for its second annual Brodsky Grant.

For 2006, AFA has increased the amount of the Brodsky Grant to \$25,000. It will again be awarded to a new or existing program that better the lives of those affected by Alzheimer's disease or a related illness, and exemplifies innovativeness, greatest need and replication potential.

Only AFA nonprofit member organizations can apply. Applications are due May 15.

AFA initiated this grant last year in honor of AFA's chairman, Bert Brodsky, and his wife, Muriel, for their generosity and outstanding commitment.

Meanwhile, at its Caring for the Community conference in Brooklyn, NY last fall, AFA formally announced that it had awarded the inaugural Brodsky Grant, for \$20,000, to The Eden Alternative for its new "Eden at Home's Core Concept's Training Program."



Eden officials Nancy Fox and Laura Beck were on hand to explain the company's groundbreaking program.

The program will provide tools for meaningful care in the home environment and "nurtures each person's capacity for growth."

▲ (l. to r.) Laura Beck, program director at The Eden Alternative; Bert Brodsky, AFA's chairman; Nancy Fox, executive director of The Eden Alternative; Eric J. Hall, AFA's chief executive officer; and Deidre Hall, actress and featured speaker at AFA's Caring for the Community conference

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its assisted living residences in California, Delaware, Maryland and New Jersey to craft panels.

On a more local level, The Villages of Wilkes TL, North Wilkesboro, NC, will honor all individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their families.

Joyce Gonda, the activity director at the 60-guest assisted living facility, views the meaning of the quilt from another angle: the value quilts and quilting bring to those with dementia. One of her group's favorite activities is its quilting circle.

"Although I do most of the sewing and cutting, it provides an opportunity for the clients to socialize and reminisce, giving them a feeling of peace for just a few minutes...The different fabrics

provide tactile stimulation in addition to memory stimulation," Gonda said.

Now, to make a patch—a block based on a friendship square—for the AFA Quilt to Remember, Gonda said she plans "a group venture with the guests helping in whatever capacity they are able, even if it's just being part of the group."

AFA figuratively began "putting the pieces together" at year's end by announcing the quilt with a message of hope for the holidays. It will literally put the pieces together when this profound work of emotional art is unveiled for the first time next fall. After the inaugural display, the AFA Quilt to Remember will travel to cities across America.

There is no cost to participate, although donations to support the project, including the cost of shipping, are welcome.

The AFA Quilt to Remember marks AFA's third major national initiative, in addition to its annual National Memory Screening Day and National Commemorative Candle Lighting, to highlight the issue of care for those affected by Alzheimer's disease and related illnesses.

"The quilt reflects another compelling way to bring the nation together for care," Hall said.

Panel makers can obtain an application and instructions by visiting AFA's Web site, www.alzfdn.org, or calling (toll-free) 866-AFA-8484.

AFA Web Site—A Hit!

Traffic to AFA’s Web site has soared in recent months, with a 69 percent increase in November alone compared to the previous month. AFA adds more content and updates information, including upcoming events and new members, on an ongoing basis. Take a look: www.alzfdn.org.

Hot off the Press

AFA’s unique quarterly magazine for caregivers rolled off the press with a new creative look and a new name—care *AD*vantage™—as of the fall 2005 issue. Remaining the same: its user-friendly, expert content and free subscription. Letters from readers praise the re-design, and subscription requests are pouring in. To sign up for a free subscription or to order bulk copies, call AFA (toll-free) at 866-AFA-8484 or visit www.alzfdn.org.



◀ AFA’s publication, care *AD*vantage™

Hail to the Sergeant

And the winner of the 2005 Distinguished Service Award is... Sergeant Dale Phillips of the Tuscaloosa County (AL) Sheriff’s Office. With this award, presented for the first time in 2005, AFA and Project Lifesaver International honor a public safety official who has gone above and beyond to execute searches and promote Project Lifesaver’s rapid response program to track wanderers. Phillips has extensively trained agencies in the program throughout the state. The department’s sheriff, Edmund M. Sexton, Sr., called the officer “a leader and champion for Project Lifesaver.” As the first recipient, Phillips and his wife were treated to a New York get-away and monetary prize. He will formally receive a medal at a Project Lifesaver fundraising gala in February.

New York, New York

The New York State Department of Health recently awarded AFA a three-year grant for an initiative that will provide support and education to caregivers, healthcare professionals and volunteers in New York City. One of 19 “Alzheimer’s Disease Community Service Programs” funded throughout the state, AFA’s project will incorporate support groups, including ones for underserved sectors of the population; workshops on care-related strategies for family caregivers and volunteers; and face-to-face training utilizing the training program produced by AFA’s professional division, Dementia Care Professionals of America.

In Spanish

In an attempt to reach out to ethnic populations, AFA has translated several of its educational brochures into Spanish. Now available: “Memory Screenings,” “Successful Caregiving,” “Prevent Wandering,” and “Activities of Daily Living.” To obtain these brochures, call AFA (toll-free) at 866-AFA-8484 or write info@alzfdn.org.

Commemorative Candle Lighting Unifies Nation

Americans were united on November 10, aglow with flames of hope and the warmth of community as part of AFA’s National Commemorative Candle Lighting to remember and honor individuals with Alzheimer’s disease and related illnesses, and their caregivers.

AFA’s third annual Candle Lighting included formal ceremonies in more than 35 states that were hosted by local Alzheimer’s agencies, long-term care facilities, health centers, churches, and other organizations. AFA itself held the lead ceremony in New York City.

Uniquely, the Sunkissed Tanning Salon, New Bedford, MA, rather than hold an actual ceremony, invited the community to “stop by and light a candle of care” from 8am to 9pm.

Other sites likewise added their own local flavor:

- The mayor of Vinita, OK signed a proclamation in support of National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month to help publicize the gathering at the community’s Rosewood Terrace Nursing Center.

- Volunteers of America Oregon, which hosted three ceremonies in Portland, crafted paper candles and put clients’ names on the flames.
- At Lawrence County Geri Care, New Castle, PA, students at a local high school sang “One Candle Lights the Way.”
- Sussex County Homestead, Newton, NJ, included a poetry reading and inspirational music.

The ceremonies rallied clients, family members, healthcare professionals, clergy, local government officials, and the general public.

The turnout of relatives of three clients who passed last year from Alzheimer’s disease made the ceremony especially poignant at Especially You Assisted Living, LLC, Eureka, CA, for example.

“We had some tears and a lot of sharing,” said Donna Throgmorton, the facility’s owner. “I think that it helped with closure for some of the families and some of my staff.”

Mark your calendar for AFA’s fourth annual National Commemorative Candle Lighting on November 9, 2006.



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Conference Triple Play Set for San Diego


San Diego will be the destination point this June for not one, not two, but three AFA conferences, each targeting different audiences in the dementia community.

■ **June 21-23** AFA's fourth annual Membership Conference, Holiday Inn Bayside. Open to two attendees from each member and associate member organization, the conference will offer an opportunity to hear AFA's future plans and help shape its agenda, share best practices and network with fellow members.

■ **June 25-26** AFA's Caring for the Community conference, Sheraton San Diego. Welcoming 150 executives of dementia-related organizations in California, this unique conference will

focus on both disease education and capacity building skills, and provide the opportunity for colleagues to communicate ideas and concerns. This event is free and includes an overnight stay.

■ **June 26** AFA's Concepts in Care conference, Sheraton San Diego. Geared for family caregivers and healthcare professionals, the conference will address medical, behavioral, practical and caregiving issues from professional and first-hand perspectives, and include an exhibit hall. Professionals can qualify for continuing education credits.

For more information about each of the conferences, as well as exhibit and sponsorship opportunities, call AFA (toll-free) 866-AFA-8484. 

Reach Out for Care

Need help? Reach out to AFA for care.

AFA's services include a toll-free hotline, counseling by licensed social workers, educational materials and conferences, a quarterly caregiver magazine—care *ADvantage*[™], and referrals and grants to local organizations that provide hands-on support services.

For assistance or to make a tax-deductible donation, call (toll-free) 866-AFA-8484 or visit www.alzfdn.org.

**Join
AFA**

AFA welcomes nonprofit and for-profit organizations across the U.S. that are involved in dementia care to join the foundation. For more information or to apply for membership, contact AFA at (toll-free) **866-AFA-8484** or log onto **www.alzfdn.org**.



Alzheimer's Foundation of America