



# Memory Matters

January • February • March

**Heart of America Chapter**  
and the  
**Mollie Tivol Alzheimer's  
Family Resource Center**

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## Online Chat Rooms and Message Boards Provide Welcome Venue for Caregivers

The one thing caregivers can never get enough of is information. The most prized information comes not from a book, brochure or video, but from other caregivers who are going through the same things as they are. That is why the Alzheimer's Association has created online message boards and chat rooms. As a caregiver you now have an online communication forum to share your thoughts and experiences, query your colleagues and make new friends. We want you to join this online community.

Perhaps you have never utilized a chat room or a message board. There is nothing to fear. Reaching out to others in a similar situation is, typically, a necessary task in working through the grief and challenges of Alzheimer's. While support groups are often the best connections between both caregivers and those in the early stages of the disease, for some support groups are not logistically feasible. As an alternative or a supplement to support groups, consider participating in a chat room or a message board.

A message board forum is a broad topic – e.g., “Caregivers Forum,” under which there can be many discussions. Each discussion page begins with the original posting, and displays all subsequent replies in date order, with the latest reply last. A chat room provides Internet users with a way to type messages to one another in “real time.” When a user sends a message, it instantly appears on the computer screens of everybody who is in the “chat room.” Messages are only seen by anyone logged into the chat room. Chat rooms provide online users a way to simulate a conversation.

*Continued on page 5*

**Here is an example of a concern you might see posted on the message board and a response:**

**Concern:** *My mother is constantly “losing” her purse. She is actually hiding it in fear that someone will steal it (the purse is empty). At first it was amusing...but now it is disheartening. Does anyone have any ideas on how to stop this behavior?*

**Answer:** *I went through the same thing with my mom always “misplacing” her wallet. I came to realize there were 3 or 4 “hiding places.” I found two other wallets and divided the money equally into each and placed one wallet in each “hiding place.” Now when mom calls I send her to a “hiding place” where she finds a wallet and she is relieved.*

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## Your Most Important New Year's Resolution

by Debra R. Brook, Executive Director

'Tis the season... Lots of activity. Increased distractions. And below freezing temperatures. Unfortunately, this season also brings an increase in the number of wandering incidents. In the past month, five such incidents have been reported in our service area.

Wandering is one of the most frightening and potentially life-threatening behaviors of people with Alzheimer's disease. As many as 60 percent of the four million Americans with Alzheimer's disease will wander at some point, leaving home and unable to find their way back.

Wandering can happen anytime or anyplace. Too often, the need to implement precautions only becomes clear when someone has experienced a critical incident. Since no two people experience Alzheimer's disease in the same way, it is impossible to predict which individuals with Alzheimer's will wander and get lost. How many times have we heard "Mom would never wander away."

The best new year's resolution you can make with and for your loved one is to take the necessary steps NOW to prevent wandering.

For those of you with Alzheimer's disease, carry pertinent names and phone numbers with you at all times. Enter them into your cell phone. Register with Safe Return. Have labels with pertinent information sewn or ironed in your clothes. Do not leave the house without someone

knowing where you are going. Accept family concerns and discuss together realistic precautions.

For those of you who are family members, register your loved ones in Safe Return. Inform your neighbors of your loved one's condition. Call our office and request the Home Safety booklet for recommendations and guidelines on keeping your home safe and secure.

The Alzheimer's Association has made education about wandering and ways to prevent it a priority. Please resolve to make it your priority as well. From our Board and staff, we wish all of you a happy, healthy and SAFE new year.

## Memory Matters

is a quarterly publication of the  
**Alzheimer's Association –  
Heart of America Chapter**

**24-hour Information & Support Line**  
800.272.3900  
[www.alz-heartofamerica.org](http://www.alz-heartofamerica.org)

**Main Office**  
3846 W. 75th Street  
Prairie Village, KS 66208  
913.831.3888 FAX 913.831.1916

**Midtown Satellite Office**  
6400 Prospect, West Building, Suite 640B  
Kansas City, MO 64132  
816.361.6604 FAX 816.361.6627

**Northeast Kansas Regional Office**  
515 South Kansas Avenue  
Suite B-2  
Topeka, KS 66603  
785.234.2523 FAX 785.234.0919

**Northwest Missouri Regional Office**  
10th and Faraon  
St. Joseph, MO 64501  
816.364.4467 FAX 816.364.2553

**Southeast Kansas Office**  
UCDD Building, 2601 Gabriel  
Parsons, KS 67357  
620.421.6550 ext. 1794  
FAX 620.421.6550 ext. 1702

## Amazing Things Happen When Given the Chance to Paint a Memory

Every week in more than 24 facilities in our Chapter service area, Memories in the Making<sup>®</sup> groups gather with watercolors, blank paper, and the permission to paint whatever they want. Trained volunteers encourage the sometimes timid participants, only to watch true artists blossom as striking landscapes, portraits, and still lifes are created. Some of the paintings are simple, some complex, but all are masterpieces in their own right.

Sometimes the artist is clearly painting a memory. Perhaps the porch on a childhood home, a beach once visited, or a beloved pet is the subject of the painting. The memories of these life's treasures are stored deep within, yet no matter how far the dementia has reached, somehow just the act of painting allows the memory to be recalled in a beautiful way.

The Alzheimer's Association is currently seeking individuals who would like to volunteer their time in a creative and caring capacity to work with a Memories in the Making<sup>®</sup> group. Painting is one of the few ways those with dementia can express themselves when other forms of communication are difficult. As a volunteer art facilitator you will help provide increased self-esteem for these individuals through the value of helping them create art and resurrect memories.

It is not necessary that Memories in the Making<sup>®</sup> facilitators be trained artists. This is an ideal volunteer opportunity for those who love to work with, and make a positive impact on, the elderly.

If assigned as a Memories in the Making<sup>®</sup> facilitator, you will be asked to assist on a regular basis — once a week for a 1- to 2-hour commitment. You will work with 4 to 8 individuals. Professional materials and training are provided.

If you are interested in volunteering for the Memories in the Making<sup>®</sup> program, please contact

Matthew Dehaemers  
Memories in the Making<sup>®</sup> Art Coordinator  
(913) 831-3888  
matt.dehaemers@alz.org

### From Paper to Prized Possession

You may wonder what happens to the artwork that comes from a Memories in the Making<sup>®</sup> group. Needless to say, it is all cherished. Some families choose to keep the artwork their loved ones create. But others choose to donate the artwork to the annual Memories in the Making<sup>®</sup> Art Auction Event.

This fundraiser showcases the treasures and the stories behind our talented artists. Last year a total of 37 pieces of Memories in the Making<sup>®</sup> artwork were displayed and sold at the Art Auction Event. Each piece was accompanied by a brief biography of the artist.

More than \$112,000 was raised at this event to support the programs and services of the more than 200,000 individuals, caregivers and family members who are experiencing the journey of Alzheimer's in our Chapter service area.

## Please mark your calendar for the 2006 Art Auction Event!

April 21

Baron BMW

An array of elegant hors d'oeuvres  
and cocktails will be provided

\$100 per person



"Buttons" by Curtis Ziniker

## Glad You Asked

by Jeanne Reeder, L.M.S.W., Individual and Family Services Specialist

If you are constantly fighting the scales and really enjoy food like I do, it is hard to believe that anyone would or could forget to eat, yet that often happens to a person with Alzheimer's disease. It is not uncommon to hear questions about eating on a daily basis. "How do I get Mom to eat? She just keeps losing weight." "Dad is eating every minute and has gained ten pounds. What should we do?" Whether your loved one is eating too much food or too little, nutrition and eating issues for the Alzheimer's/dementia person often create difficult challenges for the caregiver.



Jeanne Reeder, L.M.S.W.

The first step in meeting this challenge is to assess the problem. Nutrition and eating problems often fall into one of the following categories: (1) Physical difficulties can be caused by ill fitting dentures, infected teeth, sore gums, or dry mouth. (2) Medications can increase appetite or act as an appetite suppressant. (3) Chronic diseases such as depression, diabetes, heart problems, intestinal problems or constipation can impact our eating habits. (4) Changes due to normal aging can impact appetite. As a person ages, the senses of smell and taste diminish. Further, some people may become less active as they age and require less food. (5) Other multifaceted changes that affect eating occur as a result of Alzheimer's disease/dementia. Such changes often require creativity, patience, and persistence to improve the eating and nutritional needs of your loved one.

A trip to the doctor's or dentist's office may be a step in the assessment process and the first step toward correcting the problem. But what do you do when everything physical is ruled out and it all comes down to Alzheimer's disease? Our loved ones may simply forget to eat, lose the skills to fix a meal, or have problems chewing or swallowing even their favorite foods. In the early to mid-stage of this disease, many of the problems we perceive are due to behavioral changes. Physiological changes generally start at the end of the mid-stage and continue into the late stage. Here are some ideas to consider when trying to increase nutrition and improve meal time.

**1. Consider the person:** People need some sense of control. Give them some choice over the menu. Prepare some of their favorite foods. Fix five or six small meals in place of three large meals. If your loved one is talking

about breakfast at lunch time, he or she may eat better and get more nourishment from cereal and toast than from soup and a sandwich.

**2. Check out the environment:** Is it full of confusion or distractions? Turn off the radio or TV. Will soft and relaxing music help? Sometimes there may be too many people or other distracting stimuli in the dining area. Make the area inviting and comfortable to meet the needs of the person.

**3. Watch for high levels of distraction/lower attention spans:** People with Alzheimer's will often eat more slowly. Be patient. Do not rush them. Allow plenty of time for them to finish their meal. If their food becomes cold because of this, be sure to warm it up, as cold food is less appetizing. Be sure the reminders to eat are gentle and simple. If necessary, serve one item at a time. Be mindful of distraction caused from patterned plates, tablecloths, or placemats. Use plain dishes with a contrasting tablecloth to help distinguish their plate from the table.

**4. Assist the person to remain independent:** You may need to make adaptations to eating utensils, for example, provide a spoon instead of a fork, or use a big bowl instead of a plate. Use cups and mugs instead of glasses and only fill them half full. Place a person's hand on or near the eating utensil. Serve finger foods. Keep meal times as a family event as long as you can.

**5. Chewing or swallowing problems:** Serve soft foods. Avoid foods like nuts, popcorn or raw vegetables which may become lodged in the throat. Remind a person to eat slowly, chew, and swallow each morsel. Encourage good posture. The person should sit up straight with the head slightly forward to eat. Cut food into small bites. Grind or puree food and thicken liquids as necessary.

Each individual is different, and it is probably impossible to provide an exhaustive list of ways to improve eating and nutrition for the person with Alzheimer's disease. As with so many of the problems we discuss in this column, what will work for Mom may not work for Uncle John. Trial and error are the keynotes for coping with this disease. Be flexible and creative in finding ways to encourage your loved one. After all, in this case especially, the proof is in the pudding.

For more information on this topic, contact Jeanne Reeder at the Chapter office or visit the Mollie Tivol Alzheimer's Family Resource Center at the main Chapter office in Prairie Village.

## Chat Rooms and Message Boards

*Continued from page 1*

These online forums are geared for family caregivers, people with Alzheimer's disease and professional caregivers. Logon to [www.alz.org/messageboards](http://www.alz.org/messageboards) and click on the "Browse" button. This will allow you to anonymously preview a message board. If you like what you see, go back to the original website page and click on the "Register" button. There is no charge to use these forums. Trained care consultants are monitoring the boards and can respond on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association when appropriate. Some forums are available in Spanish.

Sometimes when we aren't sure where to turn for help we are surprisingly encouraged, maybe even motivated by others and their experiences. We hope the new online forums provide a safe place where you can be informed, taught, and inspired. One thing we know for sure...there is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared, is doubled. The following is a condensed version of a story found on the Alzheimer's Association Message Board. We believe it is a testament of how we can inspire each other in the simplest of ways.

### ***The Hospital Window***

*Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back. The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their families, homes, jobs, and where they had been on vacation.*

*Every afternoon the man who sat up would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window. The man confined to lying down began to live for those one hour periods where his world would be broadened by what his roommate would say.*

*The man sitting up would say the window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man described all this in exquisite detail, the man lying down would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene.*

*Days and weeks passed. One morning the man, who had shared all that he saw out the window, passed away. As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone.*

*Painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look out the window. He strained and slowly turned to look out the window where his friend had so often described the world outside. He faced a blank wall. The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window.*

*The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."*

## Caring for the Caregiver Conference

The 6th annual Caring for the Caregiver conference will be held Saturday, April 22, 2006 at the Curry Auditorium at Baptist-Lutheran Medical Center, 6601 Rockhill Rd., Kansas City, MO, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



*Nevada Lee, MD*

Guest speaker Nevada Lee, MD, known as "the doctor who makes housecalls," will share important information you need as a caregiver for someone with Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Lee specializes in geriatric internal medicine and lives by her motto "You're never too old to feel good!"

The goal of the conference is to experience self-care activities and to celebrate together the strength and courage it takes to journey through Alzheimer's. In addition to the keynote address from Dr. Lee, the conference will feature remarks from honorary chairperson and Kansas City Star columnist Lewis Diuguid, pampering and rejuvenating activities including chair massages, the tea room and the energizing room. The conference is free to caregivers. Registration materials will be available March 1, 2006. For more information, please call Kelly Loeb at 913-831-3888 or email Kelly at [kelly.loeb@alz.org](mailto:kelly.loeb@alz.org).

## 5th Annual Defining Hope Conference Draws Record Crowd

"Defining Hope: Putting the Person Before the Process, Validation Therapy and the Person Centered Care," was presented by keynote speaker, Naomi Feil, MSW, ACSW. Ms. Feil is the Executive Director of the Validation Training Institute and creator of the Validation method.

This method of communication places emphasis on validating the past and present feelings of the person with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. This conference was produced in partnership with Heart of America Hospice, Kansas Health Care Association and the Kansas Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. Special thanks go to the Foundation for Hospice Care for sponsoring this event.

## With New Prescription Drug Coverage, Medicare Covers More Than Ever

by Mark McClellan, MD, PhD, Administrator, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Starting January 1, 2006, dependable coverage for prescription drugs will be available to all people with Medicare. Everyone with Medicare is eligible for this coverage, regardless of income, health status, or current prescription expenses. It's time to consider how this important new coverage can make life better for you and everyone you love.

**How the coverage works.** Medicare prescription drug coverage is insurance that covers both brand-name and generic prescription drugs at participating pharmacies in your area. Private companies will provide the coverage through Medicare drug plans. To get covered, you choose a plan and pay a monthly premium. When you join a plan, Medicare helps pay the bill.

**How the coverage helps.** A typical person with Medicare and no drug coverage today could see total drug costs drop by about 50%. Even people who do not take a lot of prescription drugs now should consider joining. As we age, most people need prescription drugs to stay healthy. Signing up for Medicare prescription drug coverage can provide protection against very high prescription drug bills in the future.

Extra help is available for people with limited income and resources. People who qualify for the most extra help will have almost no drug expenses.

**How to join.** Medicare drug plan enrollment continues through May 15, 2006. You must join a plan to get coverage. All Medicare drug plans will meet Medicare's strict requirements, but they may differ in terms of costs and coverage. The choice you make depends on what kind of health coverage you have now, and whether or not you already have prescription drug coverage. You will receive information on the different options that apply to your situation.

Just like other insurance, you can pay less if you sign up early. Joining when you are first eligible means you pay a lower monthly premium than if you join after the open enrollment period ends on May 15, 2006. If you don't join a plan by May 15, 2006, you may pay a late enrollment penalty.

**How to learn more.** We urge you to join all of America in learning more about this new Medicare coverage. Discuss it with your family and friends. Keep an eye out for community meetings. For detailed information, you can look at the Medicare & You 2006 handbook, visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) on the web or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

For more information about the new Medicare prescription drug coverage visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) on the web, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or look at the Medicare & You 2006 handbook.



Keeping yourself mentally challenged is an important part of your overall health. See if you can solve these brain teasers (answers shown at the end, but don't look yet!)

1. There is a common English word that is nine letters long. Each time you remove a letter from it, it still remains an English word — from nine letters right down to a single letter. What is the original word, and what are the words that it becomes after removing one letter at a time?
2. Can you find a five letter word, which, when typed in upper case, reads the same upside down as it does right side up?

3. On my way to St. Ives I met a man with seven wives. Each of the wives had seven sacks. Each of the sacks held seven cats. Each of the cats had seven kittens. Kittens, cats, sacks and wives, how many were going to see St. Ives?
4. I am a three digit number.  
My tens digit is five more than my ones digit.  
My hundreds digit is eight less than my tens digit.  
What number am I?

**READY FOR THE ANSWERS? TURN THIS PAGE UPSIDE DOWN!**

1. Starting - starting - starting - string - string - string - sing - sin - in - I
2. SWIMS
3. Just me, I met the others along the way.
4. 194

**BRAIN CHALLENGE ANSWERS**

Heart of America Chapter Calendar of Events

January • February • March

THE FAMILY SERIES

This six part series addresses many of the common concerns caregivers have regarding Alzheimer's disease.

- Part I – “What can I expect?”
- Part II – “I don't need any help”
- Part III – “He just sits around all day”
- Part IV – “Is she on too many medications?”
- Part V – “I can't do this anymore”
- Part VI – “I should, I ought, I have to”

March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5

Noon – 1:30 p.m.  
Wexford Place, 6500 N Cosby Ave, Kansas City, MO

BREAKFAST CLUBS

A hometown support experience where people gather in a safe environment and where support is provided in a round table way.

Chanute, Kansas

The first Wednesday of every month  
Holiday Park Restaurant, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Fort Scott, Kansas

The third Wednesday of every month  
Mercy Hospital, The Xavier Room, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Parsons, Kansas

The first Thursday of every month  
The Parsonian Restaurant  
1725 Broadway, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Pittsburg, Kansas

The third Thursday of every month  
Mount Carmel Hospital — The Sheridan Room  
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Kansas City, Missouri

The second Saturday of every month  
St. Louis Center, 5930 Swope Parkway, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

St. Joseph, Missouri

The third Wednesday of every month  
Francis Street United Methodist Church, 12th & Faraon  
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. \$5 Fee

Trenton, Missouri

The first Wednesday of every month  
Lakeview Restaurant, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

JANUARY

January 18 – Building Creative Dementia Caregivers: A Train the Trainer Approach

Training for the education staff of long-term care and other health-related agencies on the needs and management of people with dementia.  
Alzheimer's Association – Heart of America Chapter  
Northeast Kansas Regional Office  
515 S. Kansas, #B2, Topeka, KS  
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Fee \$65

January 18 – Legal Issues

An attorney will speak on legal issues facing people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia.  
Main Chapter Office  
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

January 31 – ALMOST HOME Documentary Airst

ALMOST HOME chronicles a year in the life of a Milwaukee nursing home that is implementing a revolutionary new approach to the challenge of making a nursing home feel like home  
Check your local TV listings for specific air time.

FEBRUARY

February 15 and 22 – Redefining Me

A series for individuals who are new to the diagnosis of Alzheimer's.  
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.  
Warrensburg Public Library, 432 N. Holden, Warrensburg, MO

February 21 – Building Effective Skills Training (BEST)

Specifically for nursing assistants, recreational and activity aides in extended care and community setting. Participants will receive certificates of attendance.  
Main Chapter office  
8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Fee \$25

MARCH

March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5 – Family Series

March 8 – Current Research Trends and Efforts on the Neurological Disorders

Dr. Story Landis, Director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, National Institute of Health, Washington D.C. will be the keynote speaker. Limited seating is available.  
Date and location to be determined. Call Michelle Niedens for details at 913-831-3888.

March 1 and 8 – Redefining Me

A continuation of the series which began in February.  
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.  
Warrensburg Public Library, 432 N. Holden, Warrensburg, MO

March 6, 13, 27 – ABC's for Caregivers

5:50 – 8:00 p.m.  
Shawnee County Public Library  
Topeka, KS



Storling Dance Theater's  
"butterfly"

Friday, January 20 — 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday, January 21 — 1:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.  
Yardley Hall at the Carlsen Center  
Tickets: \$20 – \$25  
For reserved seats call (913) 469-4445

"Butterfly," a story of one woman's venture through Alzheimer's and all the people who lavishly love and support her.

Heart of America Chapter  
3846 W. 75th Street  
Prairie Village, KS 66208

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



*Mission Statement:*

*To provide education and leadership to enhance care and support services for those affected by Alzheimer's disease while supporting efforts to eliminate the disease.*

**GENERAL CONTRIBUTION FORM**

**Yes! I want to help the thousands of area families affected by Alzheimer's disease!**

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Check Enclosed (payable to Alzheimer's Association)  Visa  MasterCard Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

Card Holder's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please print, and include salutation (Mr. & Mrs., Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ms.) Donor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

My gift is given:  In Memory of \_\_\_\_\_  In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

Special Occasion \_\_\_\_\_ (birthday, anniversary, congratulations, etc.)

Please notify: Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me information about:  Volunteering  Providing for the Alzheimer's Association in my will

I have made a gift to the Alzheimer's Association in my will  My employer has a matching gift program, form enclosed

**Please return to: Heart of America Chapter • 3846 W. 75th Street • Prairie Village, KS 66208**  
**For more information call the Chapter office: 913-831-3888 or 800-272-3900**