

November is Alzheimer's Awareness Month

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By Tina Cox
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November is Alzheimer's Awareness Month and The Elms Nursing Home has for 17 years invested a commitment, through special activity programming, to the McDonough County senior citizens, their families and caregivers affected by Alzheimer's.

Elders affected by Alzheimer's/dementia have so much to offer, it's just a matter of meeting them in their world. It's very frustrating for them to try and do through their day experiencing the physical and cognitive roadblocks the disease creates. Little by little their independence is robbed.

Caregivers either at home caring for a loved one or a trained staff at a nursing home need to keep a few things in mind when delivering care to someone affected with dementia:

-A caregiver needs to allow time for themselves. Accept help from other family members, friends, neighbors, or other caregivers if working in a nursing facility. This may be just long enough to run an errand or grab a cup of coffee with a friend. If the caregiver is tired or ill, it will affect how they give care to the person affected by the disease.

-Reduce obstacles such as too many choices. Form questions that allow for one or two choices. Limit stimulation, noise and clutter.

-Do not expect too much from the senior with dementia. Keep questions simple and direct. Do not expect detailed, specific answers to questions that are quiz-like. This produces frustration and anxiety for the senior.

-Avoid arguing with the senior. If they are safe, validate their response. If they are speaking about a past event, just allow the conversation to continue. Allow them to share things the way they remember. Trying to correct the facts can lead to confrontation and undesirable behaviors.

-Seek information from the Alzheimer's Association or look to local resources that may help. The Central Illinois Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association can be reached at 309-681-1100. A caregiver support group meets at 1 p.m. the 3rd Thursday of each month at Macomb City Hall.

Remember that caring for someone with Alzheimer's is equally difficult for caregiver and patient. Use different techniques until you find the one that works and be aware that what works today may not work the same tomorrow. If the challenge becomes too great to care for the senior at home, visit area nursing facilities to find the one that can care for your loved one and help provide quality of life care that meets their needs.



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