

## Statewide Resources For Seniors, Caregivers and Professionals

### A Physician's Journey With Alzheimer's Disease

*A retired physician and an emeritus professor of medicine at UCLA shares his insights and even tips for coping with this difficult and growing problem.*

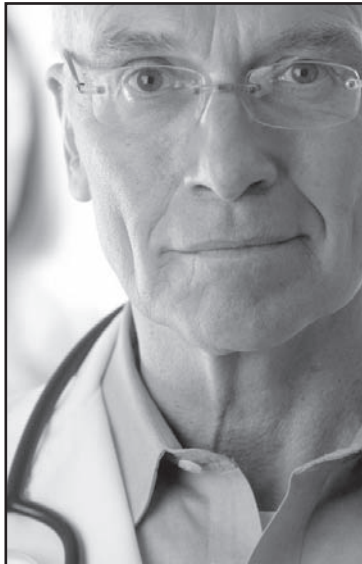
I am a retired physician and an emeritus professor of medicine. I also have Alzheimer's disease.

Before my diagnosis, I was certainly familiar with the disease, having seen patients with Alzheimer's over the years in my internal medicine practice. But I was slow to suspect my own affliction.

Now that I've been diagnosed, I can trace my problems back some 10 years, to when I was 76. I had been chairing a monthly program in medical ethics, and I knew most of the speakers and found it easy and enjoyable to introduce them. Then, suddenly, I found I had to rely on prepared material to make the introductions. I started to forget names, though never faces. These kinds of lapses are common in aging brains, so it was easy for me to write them off to "senior moments."

In the following years, I had coronary surgery and then two TIAs (transient ischemic attacks), or small strokes. My neurologist attributed my problems to them, but my mind continued to deteriorate even though I had no more strokes. The final blow was the occasion one year ago when I was receiving a citation for service in my hospital. I stood up to thank the presenters and found that I could not say a word.

It was my wife who insisted I go to the doctor for a diagnosis. As much as I was in denial and tried to dismiss my lapses as normal aging (doctors are often not willing patients), she knew something was wrong. My internist put me through a few memory tests in the office and then ordered a PET scan of the brain, which predicts Alzheimer's with 95% accuracy.



After the diagnosis, I was started on a medicine called Aricept, which has been used for many years and which has many side effects. I had two of them — bad diarrhea and appetite loss. I'd had a few Alzheimer's patients in my practice who had taken this medicine with no benefit, so I wasn't expecting much. I wanted to abandon it because of the side effects, but my doctor urged me to continue. The side effects disappeared and another drug, Namenda, was added. These drugs are by no means miracle cures, and in many patients they have little effect. I was one of the rare lucky ones.

In two months I was much better, and I am now close to normal. At my worst, I had difficulty speaking, did not know the names of my grandchildren or my doctor, could not add or subtract or find my way home. Now I can do all these things.

We've come a long way in our understanding of the disease since Dr. Alois Alzheimer, a German physician, first established a link in the early 20th century between dementia and the presence of plaques and tangles of an unknown material. That material is now known to be the accumulation of a peptide called Beta-amyloid. The leading hypothesis for the mechanism of Alzheimer's disease is that Beta-amyloid accumulates in brain cells, leading to neurodegeneration. Some pharmaceutical approaches are now targeted at clearing this protein from cells. However, amyloid plaques can be detected only in autopsy, so they have been associated only with people who had full-blown Alzheimer's symptoms. It is unknown whether these are the earliest biomarkers of the disease. Despite years of study, there is still so much we don't know.



*Our mission is to unite with Alaskans affected by Alzheimer's disease and related disorders to ensure quality of life until a cure is found.*

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## Welcome to Returning Board Members

Both members are returning to the board after an absence and we're very happy to welcome them back:

**Frank Appel**, Retired: UAA, Director of Accounting, will serve on the Finance Committee.

**Jane Pallister**, UAA, Associate Athletic Director, will chair the Fund Development Committee.

## alzalaska.org

Find us online for resources, mini-grants, news, events, and to support the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska with your donations.

## Find Us on Facebook

You'll find an assortment of links to inspiring and educational articles on the Internet, plus updates and notices on our upcoming events.

Join us on Facebook at *Facebook.com\ALZAlaska* and never be left out of the loop again.

**facebook**

# From the Executive Director

## Alzheimer's Disease and Healthcare Reform at the Federal Level

As I reflect on the fiscal year that just ended, I realize advocates have much to celebrate. Several major milestones were reached this year that demonstrate federal policy-makers' increased understanding of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) and the inevitable impact that the growth of this population will have on our health care system. Federal policy has taken into consideration the special circumstances of individuals with ADRD and has specifically addressed them in ways that will undoubtedly improve the quality of care for individuals and families affected by dementia.

In a long awaited move, the Social Security Administration added early-onset Alzheimer's to the list of conditions under its Compassionate Allowance Initiative. This initiative gives people with certain conditions expedited access to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Although applicants will still need to meet other eligibility criteria, this means that people with early-onset Alzheimer's will be considered eligible by virtue of the disease and will see their application process fast-tracked. For individuals with early-onset Alzheimer's dealing with the emotional and financial challenges brought on by the disease, streamlining this process is of extraordinary value.

In addition, passing of the Health Care Reform legislation brings benefits for individuals with ADRD in a variety of ways. The CLASS



Act is a new insurance program financed through voluntary payroll deductions for people who become unable to perform two or more functional activities of daily living. This insurance will provide long-term care services such as home care aids, respite and accessible transportation. Eligibility for this program specifically includes people who develop cognitive impairments. The program will greatly assist people with ADRD to remain independent for as long as it is possible.

The Health Care bill also recognizes the importance of care coordination as a key ingredient in connecting the patient with the services they need, improving communication among providers and ultimately extending the time a person can remain safely at home. In this area, the bill establishes an "Innovation Center" at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and creates several pilot projects that will test new ways to promote care coordination services.

Increased education for both family caregivers and paid

workers is addressed in the bill, also with special consideration for the care of people with dementia. This is of the utmost importance given that with the increased number of people affected by dementia, the number of family members involved in their care will grow exponentially as well as the required workforce in facilities and home care.

Although, the Health Care Reform legislation is extensive and it will take some time to see its full implementation, we are encouraged by the various provisions which give special attention to the unique circumstances of individuals with ADRD and their families. In the meantime, here at the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska, we will continue to be an effective resource for Alaskans, whether they are a frail elder, an individual facing the challenges of Alzheimer's disease or a concerned family member.

*-Dulce Nobre, Executive Director*



It's not too late to win two round-trip Alaska Airlines tickets to *anywhere* they fly. Simply be our *statewide* Amblin' for Alzheimer's fundraising grand prize winner, which will be determined after Homer Amblin', on September 18th.

# Research

## Rural Alaska has Highest Rate of Traumatic Brain Injury

An estimated 1.4 million Americans per year experience a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). The rate in rural Alaska is the highest in the nation. TBI occurs when the brain sustains sudden traumatic damage. This can be from a blow to the head or a penetrating injury; causes include car accidents, falls, gun shot wounds, and sports injuries that damage the brain.

TBI symptoms vary depending on where and how severely the brain is injured. Lasting difficulties can

range from headaches, seizures, depression, memory loss, language difficulties and more.

Evidence points to early brain injury increasing the risk for dementia later in life.

A growing pile of evidence points to early brain injury increasing the risk for dementia later in life. This has led to increased protections for some athletes, such as last year's changes in the NFL rules

requiring longer recovery times for football players after concussions. Scientists are also looking into whether a late in life brain injury may be a trigger for Alzheimer's disease in some people.

But while scientists continue working to determine the exact links between Traumatic Brain Injury and Alzheimer's disease, we can all take steps today to prevent TBI and protect our brain's future.

### Safety Tips for Preventing TBI:

Wear a seat belt *every time* you drive or ride in a car.

Wear a helmet and make sure children wear helmets when:

- riding a bike, motorcycle, or snow machine
- playing sports such as football or ice hockey
- skiing or snowboarding

Avoid falls by:

- using a step-stool with a grab bar to reach objects on high shelves
- installing handrails on stairways
- wearing ice grippers when conditions dictate

Keep firearms and ammunition stored in a locked cabinet when not in use.



If you or someone you love experiences a brain injury, there are resources to help:

Alaska Brain Injury Network  
(907) 274-2824 or (888) 574-2824

Acquired and Traumatic Brain Injury Program  
Kimberly Krick, RN: Case Manager  
(907) 269-5619 or (800) 478-9996

- By Amber Smith, Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska, Education Specialist, Juneau

### Amblin' Homer

Amblin' for Alzheimer's in Homer will be held on Saturday, September 18th. The two-mile walk and timed 10k run will begin at the Homer Lighthouse Village at 10 am (registration begins at 8:30 am). Join us for prizes, refreshments and fun! Check [www. AlzAlaska.org](http://www.AlzAlaska.org) for more information soon.

### Memory Tree Dedication

Join us on September 11th from 10:00 am to Noon for our annual Memory Tree dedication and celebration of life at the Palmer Office, Mile 2.2, Palmer-Wasilla Hwy.

# Events

## A Huge Round of Applause for Our Volunteers

The heart of our organization is our faithful volunteers. No activity or event is complete without them, from our steadfast Board members to our enthusiastic Amblin' volunteers, every person is a vital part of our team. Thank you to each and every volunteer, you make miracles happen all year long!

With great enthusiasm on a sunny day in June we invited our friends to share good food, music and fun at our Volunteer Thank You Party. A.J.'s Rib-A-Go-Go provided some terrific bar-b-que. The talented Eric and Marcella Smith entertained us with terrific tunes.



*A.J. and "J.A." from A.J.'s Rib A Go Go with their delicious food.*



*Musicians Eric and Marcella Smith, aka The Laughably Honest.*

## A Physician's Journey... *continued from front page.*

But there are also things we are learning, some of them from personal journeys like my own. Since my improvement, I have developed a list of insights I'd like to share with others facing memory problems. Carry a small book and write notes whenever there's something you want to recall later. When you cannot remember a name, make a joke and ask the person to repeat it, then write it down. Read books. Take walks. If you cannot walk, exercise in bed. Draw and paint. Garden, if you can. Do puzzles and games. Try new things. Organize your day. Learn to prepare food, eat, dress, wash and go to bed in an efficient way. Eat a healthful diet that includes fish twice a week, fruits and vegetables and omega-3 fatty acids. A reliable and good-humored book on a serious subject is "The Memory Bible" by Dr. Gary Small.

Don't withdraw from your friends and your family. This is advice I had to learn the hard way. Afraid of being pitied, I tried to keep my condition a secret, and that meant pulling away from people I cared about. But now that I've decided to be open, I've been gratified to see how accepting people are and how willing to assist.

For help with your own or a loved one's severe memory failure, the best source is the Alzheimer's Association, with offices in most cities and a central office in Chicago. It has information about caregivers, treatments and research, and it exists to help. Its latest information is sobering. There are currently 5.3 million Americans with the disease. It affects one in eight people over 65, and almost half of those over 85. The number of people in the U.S. with Alzheimer's is expected to double by 2030.

I know that I, like every other human, will eventually die. So I made myself aware of the documents that I needed to examine and sign while I was still able and alert, things like advance directives, living wills and POLSTs (physician's orders for life-sustaining treatment). I've tried to make sure that those who love me know my wishes. When I do not know who I am, or recognize anyone, and I am incapacitated with no chance of improvement, I want comfort and palliative care only.

*--Arthur Rivin practiced internal medicine in Los Angeles and is a professor emeritus at UCLA.*

# News & Events

## Amblin' Wrap-up

We at the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska offer a huge *thank you* to all of the individuals and teams that took time out of their busy lives to help us in supporting Alaska's seniors. A total of 241 individuals walked the trails of Kincaid Park and enjoyed the food and entertainment at the Kincaid Chalet. As of this printing, Amblin' for Alzheimer's 2010 has raised \$65,277. These funds go to support programs and services for frail elders and their families across the state. Thank you.



*Thank you team Red & White & 81 for raising \$2,851*



*Amy has her eye on the Alaska Airlines tickets again this year. Can anyone catch her? To date she's raised more than \$7,000! Thank you Amy!*



*One lovely dancer from The Limerick Group, Irish Dance Academy of Alaska.*



*Lynden representatives, Maureen Van Sickle & Michele Blomberg.*

## Top 5 Individual Fundraisers (to date)

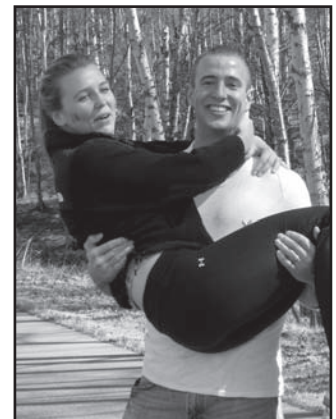
- Amy DeWitt - \$7,137
- Bing Prichard - \$1,910
- Lisa Wawrzonek - \$1,684
- Jim Clark - \$1,170
- Jackie Brunton - \$975



*Thank you team Think About It for raising \$1,485*



*Thank you Bing Prichard for raising \$1,910.*



*Katie gets a lift from Neil.*

# News & Events

## Amblin' for Alzheimer's 2010 Sponsors

Our sponsors, with their generous support, make this annual fundraiser a success each year. We gratefully thank each sponsor for their gift of goods, services or funds that make Amblin' a memorable event and most enjoyable day. Thank you.

### Point Barrow



### Denali



### Aurora

Alaska Airlines  
The Alaska Club  
Architects Alaska  
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Dooley's Athletic  
First National Bank Alaska  
Geneva Woods  
Job Ready/Ready Care  
KNBA 90.3 FM  
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Legacy Funeral Homes  
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### Taku

Alaska Neurology Center  
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Day Break Adult Day Care  
Dimond Greenhouses  
Elena's Hair Design  
General Teamsters Local 959  
G & S Management, LLC

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Hillside Happy Tails  
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Major Marine Tours  
Marty's New York Bagel Deli  
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*Special thanks to Dave Stroh, Amblin's Host and long-time, loyal supporter.*

# Around the State

## Anchorage

1750 Abbott Road  
Marilyn McKay, 561-3313

### ABC's of Caregiving:

**Fall & Fire Prevention:** Monday, July 19,  
10:00 am to Noon.

**Emergency Preparedness:** Monday, August  
16, 10:00 am to Noon.

**Driving & Dementia:** two sessions on  
Monday, September 20, 10:00 am to Noon or  
5:30 pm to 7:00 pm.

**Introduction to Alzheimer's** presentation Wednesday, July 21, 10:00 to Noon.

### Mental Fitness: held at -

Anchorage Senior Center: 2nd and 4th Thursday,  
10:00 am to 11:00 am.

Chugiak Senior Center: 4th Wednesday, 3:00 pm  
to 4:00 pm.

**Art Links:** every Friday, 11:00 am to Noon. Please  
call for screening.

**Savvy Caregiver Class:** starts in September. Pre-  
registration required.

### Copper River Basin & Prince William Sound

*Valdez, Cordova, Tatitlik, Chenega Bay*

Gay Wellman 822-5620 or 1-800-478-1080 ext. 6

**ABC's of Caregiving:** Medicare Update, Friday,  
August 6, 1 to 4:00 pm. Contact Gay for more infor-  
mation.

**Savvy Caregiver:** Copper River Basin - Please call  
for more information.

Look for us at these health fairs: **Copper River  
Health Fair:** August 7, and **Kenny Lake Health  
Fair:** Saturday, August 14.

## Fairbanks

565 University Avenue, Suite 2

Joan Adams or Nancy Elliott, 452-2277

**Art Links:** Fairbanks Pioneer Home, 2221 Eagan  
Ave. Please call for more information.

**Mental Fitness Group:** Every Thursday, 10:15 to  
11:15 am. Fairbanks Senior Center, 1424 Moore St.

## Fairbanks, *continued*

**ABC's of Caregiving:** 3:00 to 5:30 pm at the Fair-  
banks Senior Center, 1424 Moore Street.

**Driving and Dementia:** Monday, July 26

**Mental Fitness & Aging:** Monday, August 23

**Healthy Body, Healthy Brain:** Monday, Sep-  
tember 27

**Savvy Caregiver Class:** Starts in September. Pre-  
registration required

**Fairbanks Winter Show:** Look for us September  
24-26 at the Carlson Center.

## Juneau

3100 Channel Dr. Suite 19

Amber Smith, 586-6044

**ABC's of Caregiving:** Driving & Dementia. Au-  
gust (Date TBA)

**Art Links:** every Thursday, 1:00 pm at the Bridge  
Adult Day Program.

**Savvy Caregiver Class:** starts in September. Pre-  
registration required.

**Mental Fitness:** TBA

## Mat-Su Valley

Mile 2.2 Palmer-Wasilla Hwy.

Sam Meneses, 746-3413

**Art Links:** every Friday at 1:00 pm.

### ABC's of Caregiving:

**Understanding Dementia,** Tuesday, July 27,  
6:00 pm to 7:30 pm.

**Driving & Dementia,** Thursday, August 26,  
6:00 pm. to 7:30 pm.

**Mental Fitness:** Call for details.

**Memory Tree Dedication:** Saturday, September 11,  
10:00 am to Noon at the Palmer Office.

**Savvy Caregiver Class:** Starts in September. Pre-  
registration required.

# Caregiver Support

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## **ANCHORAGE: Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska - 1750 Abbott Road**

**Contact: Marilyn McKay, 561-3313**

General Caregiver Group: 1st Thursday of the month, 10:00 am to Noon

Adult Child / Relative Group: 2nd Thursday of the month, 10:00 am to Noon

Spousal Caregiver Group: 3rd Thursday of the month, 10:00 am to Noon

## **FAIRBANKS: Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska - 565 University Avenue, Suite 2**

**Contact: Joan Adams or Nancy Elliott, 452-2277**

General Caregiver Group: Every other Wednesday, 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

General Caregiver Group: 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, 11:30 am to 1:00 pm

## **HOMER: Friendship Center**

**Contact: Marjanne Schneider, 235-2295**

General Caregiver Group: 3rd Thursday of the month, 5:00 p.m to 6:30 pm

## **JUNEAU: Resurrection Lutheran Church - 740 W. 10th Street**

**Contact: 463-6177 or 866-746-6177**

Family Caregiver Support Group: 2nd Thursday of the month, Noon to 1:00 pm

## **KETCHIKAN: Southeast Senior Services**

**Contact: Nicole Essau, 225-8080**

General Caregiver Support Group: Last Wednesday, every other month, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

## **KODIAK: Kodiak Senior Center - 302 Erkskine Avenue**

**Contact: Rio Berggren, 586-6181**

General Caregiver Support Group: 4th Thursday of the month, 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm

## **MAT-SU VALLEY: Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska - Mile 2.2 Palmer-Wasilla Hwy, Palmer**

**Contact: Sam Meneses, 746-3413**

General Caregiver Support Group: 2nd Wednesday of the month, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm

## **SEWARD: Seaview Community Services**

**Contact: Dani Kebschull, 1-866-776-8210 or 262-1280**

Quarterly Training / Support Group: For more information contact Dani.

## **SITKA: Brave Heart Volunteers, Pioneer Home Manager's House - 120 Katlian Street**

**Contact: Shanna, 747-4600**

General Support Group: 2nd Wednesday of the month, Noon - 1:00 pm

## **SOLDOTNA: Soldotna Senior Center**

**Contact: Dani Kebschull, 866-776-8210 or 262-1280**

General Caregiver Support Group: Last Tuesday of the month, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Monthly Training and Support: 2nd and 3rd Monday of the month, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

## **STERLING: Sterling Senior Center**

**Contact: Dorothy Westphal, 262-6061**

General Support Group: 3rd Tuesday of the month, 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm

# Contributors

## Individuals and Businesses

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Eula Nistler  
Cecelia Nistler Daline  
Janie Franklin  
Delores Young  
Joanne Young

**Annie Olson**

Ruby Cejka  
Shirley & Stanley Heintzman  
The Austin Helmers Family  
Karen Hopp  
Joan McKinnon  
Jean Miller  
Barbara Moore  
Paws & Taws Square Dance Club  
Charlotte Sartor  
Phyllis Shafer  
Anne Winckler

**Roberta Powell**

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**Evanne M. Syren**

Darlene Sutherland

**Donald W. Taylor**

Linda & James Bishop  
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## In Honor Of

**Margaret Blackburn**

Joanne & Damon Blackburn

**Roberta Powell**

Austrid Garrett

**Jerry Siler**

Rebecca More

Contributions are individually acknowledged to the donor. When sending a memorial contribution, please indicate the name and address of the family who should receive notification of your gift. These contributions were given between April 1 & June 30, 2010.



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Or visit them at: [www.2friendsgallery.com](http://www.2friendsgallery.com)

What makes 2 Friends *a most unusual gallery*? It could be the unique artwork they sell and consign. Or it could be their friendship and the fact that they like to make their customers feel like friends too. But most unusual is their dedication to non-profit organizations in the Anchorage area. 2 Friends gives back 10% of the proceeds of their sales to a different non-profit each month.

Enjoy a most unusual shopping experience in July, knowing you're helping the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska. We were the grateful recipients of their generosity last September and are very excited to have their support again this July.

Thank you, Jacqui Ertischek and Georgia Blue, owners of 2 Friends. You're more than just two friends, you're heroes to those you help with your generosity.

**Shop 2 Friends in July and ADRAA receives 10% of the proceeds.**