



Alzheimer's/Dementia Support Group

Administrator:

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Over 5 million or nearly one in every 3 seniors are living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. This poses challenges for the care giver and family which spans all across generational lines. Long term care facilities and assisted livings are trained in dementia and Alzheimer's care, however, it is still challenging to meet their needs. The community where the majority of care is provided have no training, little or no support and feel isolated. The disease alters family members and what they have come to know and love throughout the years. They do not know how to react when someone they have known and loved their whole life no longer responds as he or she did before. It is especially difficult when the individual _ doesn't even recognize them anymore. Alzheimer's disease takes away pieces of a loved one, sneaking up little by little until one day the family does not recognize the person.

Our facility, along with our Assisted Living facility wanted to provide services to our community for this devastating disease. We came together and established the Alzheimer's/Dementia Support Group in February of 2009. The purpose of the support group is to assist family members, care givers and residents that have a diagnosis of Alzheimer's and/or dementia. The support group assist the community with encouragement, education and awareness of available assistance in the journey of Alzheimer's. We meet on the third Thursday night of each month. During the meeting, care givers are educated by a variety of our professional staff from both the Long term care facility and the assisted living facility. Social Services, Activities, Dietary, Nursing, Administration and outside sources provide educational programs. These educational programs are kept to approximately 30-minutes to allow our participants time to share their personal stories and ask questions. During this time, families will express their feelings of grief, frustration, and helplessness. The time of sharing allows for the group to give encouragement and examples of how they are coping and what is working for them with their loved one. This is often a very emotional time and you can see the family member's release of anxiety as they realize that they are not alone. Youth is also involved in the learning process which reduces their fears of what is happening with their loved one and the family dynamics that have changed.

This best practice has provided a community and facility service to raise Alzheimer's/Dementia awareness. Alzheimer's effects and/or will effect each of us in some way. As health care professionals, we are able to reach out and touch the lives of our residents, their families, community and the surrounding area. The money we raise goes toward research for possible new treatments and hopefully to one day find a cure to this debilitating disease. Together we can and we will make a difference.