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ASSOCIATION**

SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2024

Because of You



Because of You

BY MICHELE SULLIVAN

A decade ago, Alzheimer's disease research was in serious trouble.

Funding was actually decreasing, according to the National Institutes of Health. Federal research dollars tanked to just \$269 million in 2010 – a 41.8% drop from a decade-high of \$643 million in 2006. Clinical trials being done were not offering hope. The three FDA-approved drugs helped a little, for a while, but did nothing to affect the disease's terrible trajectory.

The outlook was so discouraging that labs struggled to recruit young scientists, who feared AD research would be a dead-end career.

Then, in 2011, after a strong bipartisan effort in Congress, President Obama signed into law the National Alzheimer's Project Act (NAPA). The law re-energized the entire field with

commitments to create a national AD attack plan, accelerate research, advance early diagnosis, and improve outcomes for higher-risk minority communities. In 2012, the result was unveiled. The new National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease had a lofty goal: To prevent and effectively treat Alzheimer's by 2025, and to back up that goal with the funds and an intentional approach to get there.

Since then, federal funding for research into AD and related dementia has increased to a record high of \$3.8 billion for FY 2024 – \$122 million more than last year.

Pennsylvania lawmakers, AD advocates, and volunteers have all had a hand in this sea change and continue to drive progress forward both nationally and locally, said Clay Jacobs, executive director of the Greater Pennsylvania Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.

"Pennsylvania was key to this," he said. "We activated advocates and saw strong bipartisan support across our legislators. What it meant to us is a thoughtful, intentional approach to addressing this disease with measurable outcomes that move us forward with consistency and

momentum. That commitment more than a decade ago is why we have so much optimism today."

The federal allotment isn't the only money that funds research and patient/caregiver programs, Jacobs said. This year, the national Alzheimer's Association has committed a record-breaking \$360 million into over 1,000 studies conducted in 53 countries. The Greater Pennsylvania chapter itself will invest \$6 million into local and regional research and projects

designed to help patients and families.

The Association also champions state and national legislative efforts to support research and community programs. Right now, advocates are working with Pennsylvania lawmakers and Prime Sponsor-State Senator Rosemary Brown, to drive solid bipartisan support for Senate Bill 840, the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Public Health Infrastructure Act, said Luke Rayman, advocacy

BECAUSE OF YOU CONTINUED ON #3



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BECAUSE OF YOU CONTINUED FROM #2

manager at the Greater Pennsylvania chapter.

“This bill would do things like establish the Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders Office, with a full-time director, convene a planning council and develop real solutions for challenges around everything from early detection and diagnosis to late stage care” he said. “It’s a big step toward implementing the 2014 Pennsylvania State Plan for Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders and could fundamentally change how we support future Pennsylvanians impacted by dementia.”



LUKE RAYMAN

Introduced in 2023, SB840 already has strong bipartisan

support and has progressed to the Aging and Youth Committee, where it awaits action. Gov. Josh Shapiro has also earmarked \$1.9 million to establish the new infrastructure, Rayman added.

“None of this would have been possible without our volunteers, who raise their voices and share their personal stories,” he said.

Marlon Martin is one of those volunteers. A bit of a local celebrity, “Brother Marlon” is a radio host on WAMO (107.3 FM, Wilkinsburg) known for using Gospel tunes to deliver a powerful message of hope. But when his father was diagnosed in 1997, Brother Marlon entered a completely different world.

“Dementia was a foreign word to me. I didn’t know what it meant, and when it led to Alzheimer’s, that was another word I had no interaction with. This was the first time it impacted my life.”



MARLON MARTIN

Slowly, AD robbed Brother Marlon and his mother of their protector and provider and stole his laughter and love. The community also suffered, he added. “Dad was an elected constable and a real force in the community. So we lost more than only a dad; we lost a community leader, a role model.”

As his father declined, Brother Marlon watched his mom — who has multiple sclerosis — struggle to

care for her husband at home. “We were trying to handle it as a family, but the lion’s share of the burden was always hers,” he said. “As things progressed, my mom reluctantly put him into a facility, and he was there for the remainder of his time on Earth.”

In advocating for her husband, Brother Marlon’s mom set an important example, which he has now taken up. “She became a voice for the voiceless, until a year and a half ago when she started showing signs of it too. Then I decided I would use my platform to speak out.”

For the past two years, Brother Marlon traveled to Washington, D.C. with other advocates to connect with lawmakers during the Alzheimer’s Impact Movement (AIM) Advocacy Forum.

“I met people from all across the country and we laughed together, cried together, shared our stories and felt like we’re making a difference. Even though it’s too late for my dad, it’s good to know the research is continuing and we’re gaining some ability to beat the disease. We are not there yet. But we will be.”

As we look back to all the advancements in the past 10 years, the Alzheimer’s Association and their community supporters have certainly come a long way. The voices of entire communities, growing louder each year, are forging a path into a future where those affected by this devastating disease have available care, support and education. With this passion comes hope. Hope that one day we will end this devastating disease and look towards a better future for all.

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Pittsburgh Researchers Are Leading the Fight Against Alzheimer's

BY MICHELE SULLIVAN

Imagine a world where Alzheimer's disease isn't a family-destroying death sentence, but a chronic illness managed like other health problems.

In that world, your annual blood work might include a test for beta-amyloid and tau, the abnormal brain proteins of Alzheimer's disease (AD).

You keep remembering. You keep working and playing.

In short, you keep living.



DR. WILLIAM KLUNK

That future might seem like a dream right now. But researchers at the University of Pittsburgh are working hard to make it a reality.

William Klunk, MD, PhD is one of those. A past co-director of the university's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, he's responsible for one of the biggest advances in the field, the ability to see amyloid in the brains of living people.

Dr. Klunk and his partner Chester A. Mathis, PhD, developed Pittsburgh compound B (PiB) in 2002 with funding provided by the Alzheimer's Association. When injected during a PET scan, PiB lit up amyloid, showing for the first time how the protein accumulated not only over the course of the disease, but how it begins to aggregate decades before memory problems occur.

The past 18 months have been especially gratifying for Dr. Klunk and other AD researchers, highlighted by the FDA's approval of Leqembi (lecanemab), an antibody that dissolves amyloid plaques in the brain, and the first commercially available blood test for amyloid. Another antibody, donanemab, is in late-stage development with an FDA decision expected soon. Tau antibodies are in

mid-stage testing, and blood tests for AD should be showing up in your doctor's office in the next few years. Dozens of other pathways are being explored as well, in labs all over the world.

"We have been pushing against this wall for a long time, and it's finally starting to fall," Dr. Klunk said.

Leqembi and donanemab are not likely to be silver bullets capable of single-handedly putting Alzheimer's down, Dr. Klunk said. They effectively remove amyloid plaques (sticky deposits of the protein) and slow down the disease a bit, but don't completely stop it. Because the disease has multiple triggers, Dr. Klunk and other scientists predict that it will need multiple interventions. This could be similar to how cardiovascular disease and diabetes are managed today, with early risk identification and lifestyle changes followed by therapies that keep the initial signs from escalating into a serious threat.

Blood tests provide an early hint about increased risk for many diseases, and they will be key to this intervention strategy in AD as well, according to Tharick Pascoal, MD, PhD another university researcher. He's working on a blood test that would identify people not only with abnormal amyloid levels, but also with a second important risk

70% OF DEMENTIA CAREGIVERS FEEL STRESSED WHEN COORDINATING CARE AND MORE THAN HALF OF CAREGIVERS SAID NAVIGATING HEALTH CARE IS DIFFICULT



DR. THARICK PASCOAL

factor: abnormally active astrocytes, the star-shaped brain cells that usually monitor and care for neurons.

Accumulations of amyloid plaques between neurons and tau inside of neurons injure, and eventually kill, them. This injury starts an inflammatory process that can activate astrocytes to the point where they too can damage neurons. Dr. Pascoal tested 1,000 blood samples from cognitively normal people both with and without brain amyloid. He found that only those who had both amyloid and activated astrocytes went on to develop Alzheimer's.

That's a critical finding, he said, because brain amyloid is actually rather common in older people. "About 30% of people over 65 are amyloid-positive, but only 10% of them will develop dementia in the near future. So there's this gap of 20%, with only a subset developing the disease."

Anti-amyloid antibodies will likely become a mainstay of AD treatment, but they carry risks for brain swelling and bleeding which can be serious. Since brain amyloid is relatively common, how will doctors know who really needs the antibodies? Dr. Pascoal's blood test could help pinpoint them.

The best way to treat AD, Dr. Pascoal said, would be to identify people at high risk well before they show any cognitive decline. Just as early treatment with statins can prevent heart attacks in people with high cholesterol, early AD treatment might prevent the disease from taking hold, he said.

Many researchers think that once amyloid and tau get established in the brain, it's too late to stop the disease. Leqembi was tested in people who already had signs of early AD. People who got it still declined, although their change was 27% slower than those

who got a placebo.

A new nationwide study with a site located at the Alzheimer's Disease and Research Center at the University of Pittsburgh, called AHEAD 3-45, will find out whether Leqembi can prevent the onset of AD in people who have scan-proven brain amyloid, but normal thinking and memory. Participants will get regular intravenous infusions of lecanemab for four years. Along the way they'll have cognitive tests and amyloid scans to see whether keeping amyloid at bay also preserves cognition. The study is led locally by Oscar Lopez, MD who will be the incoming chair of the Alzheimer's Association Medical & Scientific Advisory Group.

None of this cutting-edge science would be possible without multiple sources of financial support, according to Brittany Ardeno, marketing and communications manager for the Greater Pennsylvania Area Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. The Alzheimer's Association is the single



BRITTANY ARDENO

biggest nonprofit supporter of AD research in the world and has been instrumental in research performed in Pittsburgh.

"Federal research funding for Alzheimer's has increased 7-fold since 2014. Today it's at more than \$3.8 billion. We must continue to invest in new research and fund new pathways towards a cure while also encouraging new discovery. That's what it will take to reach our vision – to one day have a world without Alzheimer's disease."

24/7 Helpline Provides Alzheimer's Support, Information

Being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or caring for someone with dementia is one of the most challenging things that a person can face. It raises all sort of questions, and it can feel isolating and frightening when you don't have any of the answers.

The Alzheimer's Association has created a 24/7 helpline that can help allay your fears and provide you with the information you need to make more informed decisions. Through this free service, specialists and master's-level clinicians offer support and information to people living with dementia, caregivers, families and the public.

The helpline includes bilingual staff and interpreter services and can accommodate more than 200 languages.

When you call, you'll be able to speak confidentially about the issues that families face every day. You can learn about the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, and find out about local programs and services available to help you or your loved one.

The helpline can also provide information about legal, financial and care decisions, as well as treatment options.

"The 24/7 Helpline is really at the core of how we support people and communities," said Sara Murphy, vice-president, programs and services, Alzheimer's Association Greater Pennsylvania Chapter. "We understand that those who are caregiving for a person with any form of dementia feel isolated and alone. We can provide a listening ear, as well as information and support no matter where your loved one is in the disease process.

"The Helpline is available in 200 different languages because we don't want language to be a barrier to people getting the help and support they need," she added.

The Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900) is available around the clock, 365 days a year. If you'd prefer to live chat via computer or request help online, visit alz.org/helpline.

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Legacy of Hope: A Pittsburgh Family's Fight Against Alzheimer's

BY BRITTANY ARDEN

A Pittsburgh family is making it their mission to advance essential Alzheimer's and dementia research, in honor of their late patriarch, Joseph A. Massaro Jr., founder of Massaro Construction Group.



DAVID MASSARO

"My father started the construction business in 1967," said David Massaro, son and president of Massaro Properties, LLC. "He always led the organization and was a fearless leader, but in 2002, he started taking a step back, which wasn't like him."

David recounts his father struggling to remember names and becoming lost in familiar areas. "My father, he was not the quiet type, he became much more reserved, and you think maybe it's age, but it just wasn't his personality; you could tell there was something off with him."

Joe was initially diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2010 and as the disease progressed, the family united to support him and his wife, Carol until his passing in 2015 at the age of 79.

A conclusive diagnosis of Lewy body dementia was made after Joe's passing, prompting his family to channel resources into research aimed at enhancing early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, along with moving closer to a cure.

"Our mother saw the devastating effects that Alzheimer's can have and it became her mission to raise funds for Alzheimer's research," said Joe Massaro III, son and chairman of Massaro Construction Group. "Her wish was that everything stays in Pittsburgh because of the progress being made here."

Carol created the Joseph A. Massaro Jr. Alzheimer's Research Fund in 2014, which to date, has raised nearly \$1 million, providing grants to dementia researchers. Joe, David and their siblings Steven and Linda have continued their mother's mission, funding researchers such as Dr. Oscar Lopez, director of the University of Pittsburgh Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and incoming chair of the Alzheimer's Association Medical & Scientific Advisory Group.

In 2020, this focus led to engagement with the Alzheimer's Association, drawn by

LEGACY OF HOPE CONTINUED ON #7



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LEGACY OF HOPE CONTINUED FROM #6

its dedication to supporting Pittsburgh-based researchers and promoting early detection efforts within the city. This year alone, the Association is funding over \$750,000 to Pittsburgh-based researchers.

Collaborating with the Association, the Joseph A. Massaro Jr. Alzheimer's Research Fund has directed funding toward groundbreaking projects, including the DIAN study, as well as blood biomarker research at the University of Pittsburgh, crucial for early detection and diagnosis.

Clay Jacobs, executive director of the Alzheimer's Association Greater Pennsylvania Chapter, highlighted the significant impact of community support, particularly from the Massaro family, in funding innovative Alzheimer's and dementia research in Pittsburgh.

"This disease is one that requires all of us to fight back and the Massaro Family has done just that. The Joseph A. Massaro Jr. Alzheimer's Research Fund has made an impact on Alzheimer's research for over a decade and now Massaro Construction Group is set



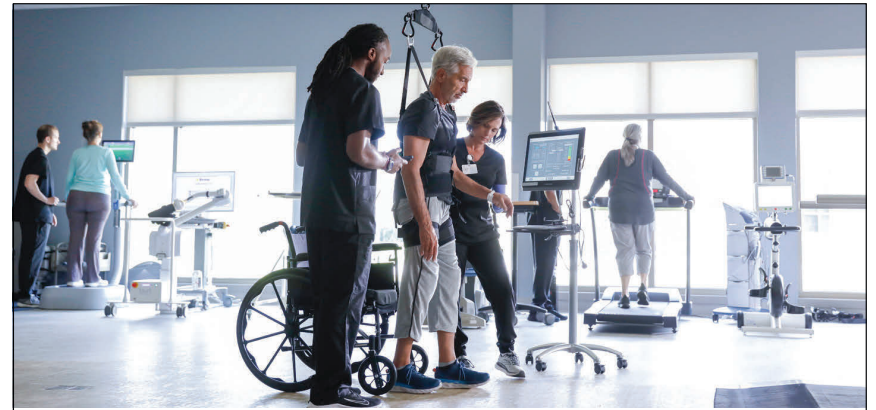
CLAY JACOBS

to become one of the top company teams for the Pittsburgh Walk to End Alzheimer's. We hope their story will inspire other

families and businesses to know they're not alone but also to get involved to help us get closer to a cure."

Massaro Construction Group participated in the 2023 Pittsburgh Walk to End Alzheimer's, raising \$8,000. With aspirations to boost their fundraising efforts in 2024, David Massaro, named honorary chair of the event, shared his fervent wish for a cure to emerge from Pittsburgh. He emphasized the importance of ongoing research and community support in fighting Alzheimer's.

"It's really exciting to see the progress that Alzheimer's researchers are making from the time my father had it until now. It gives me hope that, in my lifetime, or in my kids' lifetime, we'll find a cure and eradicate the disease."



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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Unforgettable & Alzheimer's Black American Summit Coming to Pittsburgh

BY MICHELE SULLIVAN

Playwright Garrett Davis's grandma left a gift for thousands of families, although she never knew it.

Muzelle Cheeks Davis – known to her family as “Goodness” – always had a remedy when family and friends turned to her for help and advice. But when



GARRETT DAVIS

Alzheimer's struck, it was beyond her loving power. When 20-year-old Garrett came back from college for spring break one year, his grandmother didn't remember him.

“I was devastated,” he said, simply.

As Davis matured and

honed his craft of bringing important stories to the stage, he never forgot Grandma Goodness. She inspired him to understand more about Alzheimer's, and he learned that it's twice as likely to occur in Black Americans as in Caucasians. He became a volunteer for the Alzheimer's Association and with the group's support, put his talent to work, writing two plays about Black American families coming to grips with the disease.

The newest one, “Unforgettable,” premiered in 2022. This year, it's back for a return run in 12 U.S. cities, including Pittsburgh. The free performance is set for June 22 at 2 p.m. at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center. The play is part of a series of free events that week highlighting how Alzheimer's impacts communities of color. These include a June 21 concert by Adrian Crutchfield, Prince's go-to saxophonist from 2011-2019; it's set for 7 p.m., also at the August Wilson Center. And on June 25, the Greater Pennsylvania Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association will host its 2024 “Summit on Alzheimer's and Dementia Impact in the African American Community,” at the Commonwealth Charter Academy in Homestead.

The Unforgettable event and community Summit would not be possible without the support and expertise of members of the Greater Pennsylvania ALZ Health Equity Coalition. This group is comprised of members from the following Pittsburgh area groups working hand-in-hand with the Alzheimer's Association: YWCA Greater Pittsburgh, Community and Family Builders, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Zeta Phi Beta-Gamma Alpha Tau Zeta, Faith Based Health Collaborative, University of Pittsburgh Alzheimer's Disease Research

Center (ADRC), AARP, Allegheny County Health Department, Area Agency on Aging, and Mt. Ararat Baptist Church/Black Nurses in Action.

This year's community summit, which is free and open to the public, is intended to start a conversation about how the Black American community can effectively deal with the challenges of Alzheimer's and other dementia. Its intention is to start important, collaborative discussions on finding community solutions with an emphasis on brain health, risk reduction, early detection and diagnosis and Black American representation in clinical trials.

With the time and dedication of the Alzheimer's Association and community partners, the summit has grown from 100 attendees for the inaugural event in 2022 to over 250 individuals signed up for this year's event. Diane Powell, Founder and Executive Director of Community and Family Builders in Pittsburgh, and member of the planning committee is eager to continue growing the summit each year, “Community and Family Builders has been a partner with the Alzheimer's Association for the Black American community summit since its inception”, said Powell. “Of all ethnicities, Black



DIANE POWELL

Americans are at the highest risk of developing dementia and this summit provides an opportunity to create a more equitable future.”

Early detection and risk reduction for Black American communities will

SUMMIT CONTINUED ON #9





SARA MURPHY

SUMMIT CONTINUED FROM #8

be a key topic, says Sara Murphy, Vice President of Programs and Services for the Alzheimer's Association Greater PA Chapter. For years, the Alzheimer's Association has been working tirelessly to provide education opportunities to

the local community in order to provide information on how to help combat this devastating disease.

"The Number One thing we would like people to be aware of is that there are modifiable risk factors that we can impact," Murphy said. "About 40% of cases could be prevented by lifestyle interventions like diet and exercise. "We like to say, 'What's good for your heart is good for your brain' and we encourage anyone interested in attending this year's summit to contact the Alzheimer's Association at 800-272-3900."

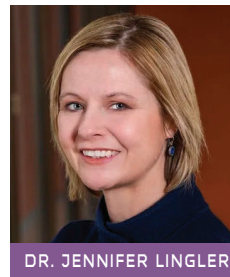
The Alzheimer's Association also advocated for years to ensure public health funding to do this work in communities. This year, the Allegheny County Health Department just secured some of those resources as one of 5 counties to receive a federal \$1.85 million BOLD grant (Building Our Largest Dementia Infrastructure). The five-year grant has three goals, said Dr. Jim Weeden, the county's Chronic Disease, Injury and Violence Prevention Program Manager.

"First is educating people with health conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure about their increased risk of Alzheimer's. Second, we want to spread the word about the importance of early detection. And finally, the BOLD grant will help us provide resources for people who are living with the disease and the people who are caring for them."

Ironically, recent studies have confirmed that although Alzheimer's disease is twice as likely among Black Americans as Caucasians, Black Americans comprise just 2% of clinical trials. The biggest reason for this is the historical lack of trust between Black communities and organized medicine, Weeden said. That's why he's developing the BOLD programs with the help of key, trusted partners of local Black American communities and the Alzheimer's Association.

"We need representatives from each unique Black community, including the faith-based communities, to come into that space and talk about how to address brain health. We want to communicate that we're not just going to ask for your input, we're going to do something with the information you entrust to us."

Jennifer Lingler, PhD, head of outreach, recruitment and engagement at the Pittsburgh Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, said programs like BOLD may help increase racial and ethnic diversity in clinical trials, like AHEAD 3-45, which is being conducted at the University of Pittsburgh ADRC and 70 other U.S. sites. AHEAD is looking at whether



DR. JENNIFER LINGLER

lecanemab, a newly approved antibody against beta-amyloid, might prevent Alzheimer's in people who have amyloid deposits in the brain, but are still cognitively normal.

Lingler says one of her main goals is to significantly increase the number of Blacks and Latinos enrolling in the study.



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Walk to End Alzheimer's and The Longest Day

BY MICHELE SULLIVAN

WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S
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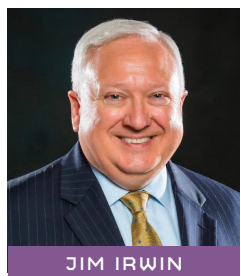
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When passion meets commitment, big things happen.

Just ask Jim Irwin and Shawn Bell, who are dedicated to some serious goal-smashing this year in the Alzheimer's Association's two biggest annual fundraisers — the Walk to End Alzheimer's and The Longest Day.

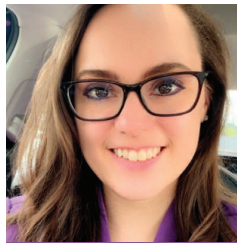
Both men have witnessed the challenge of a loved one diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia. Both spent months learning everything possible about it and how to navigate those turbulent waters. And both are committed to beating Alzheimer's by raising community awareness and financial support.

"I walk for my father," said Irwin. He is the 2024 Walk to End Alzheimer's Event Chair in Pittsburgh. "My dad developed dementia after a stroke; he died in 2017. I want to make sure no one goes through a diagnosis like this without knowing there is help — and hope — out there."



JIM IRWIN

"Irwin's first Walk was in 2022. He raised \$840 that year in about two weeks of fundraising. "Last year, Jim and his team raised more than \$8,000, with Jim bringing in more than half of that himself," said Lynzy Groves, Development Manager for the Pittsburgh Walk to End Alzheimer's. "We had our best year ever," raising



LYNZY GROVES

a total of \$700,000 this year and become one of the Top 30 Walks in the country which is a daunting challenge," Irwin said. "It's a big ask, but I think the Pittsburgh Walk is poised for greatness. This is an incredibly generous region. I believe there's no reason we can't get into the \$1 million range in the near future."

That would be no small feat, given that last year's Walks brought in \$100 million across the country.

So far, 290 participants on 101 teams have already signed up to walk the one- or two-mile Station Square portion of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. Pledges have already secured almost \$120,000, said Groves. That puts the group ahead of the curve for its event, which is set for Oct. 19 at Highmark Stadium in Pittsburgh. The festivities start at 9 a.m. with registration followed by a pre-walk ceremony honoring loved ones and families living with the disease.

This is when the flowers bloom, Groves said. At registration, everyone gets a flower-shaped pinwheel to plant in the Promise Garden, an area set aside for this colorful display of love and commitment.

"We have four colors that represent your relationship with the disease," she said. "Purple, if you have lost someone to the disease. Yellow for caregivers. Blue for people currently living with Alzheimer's or dementia, and orange for people who are advocates or simply general supporters of our cause."

During the Promise Garden ceremony, a representative from each color group

will briefly share their story. "There's never a dry eye," Groves said. "It gets me every time. It's at that point when everyone bands together in a visual display of our mission."



THE LONGEST DAY

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

However, advocates don't have to wait until October to take action against Alzheimer's and can sign up for Walk right now by visiting alz.org/walk. There are also multiple Walk kick-off events throughout the area in the late spring season. The Alzheimer's Association uses June 20, the longest day of the year, as the anchor for its own Longest Day — a chance to turn individual interests and skills into research-supporting contributions.

Baking, mahjong, car shows, fishing, and golf tournaments are just a few of the ways enthusiastic hobbyists have "put the fun in fundraising," Sofranko said.



NATHANIEL SOFRANKO

Although celebrated on June 20, The Longest Day is a year-round fundraising opportunity, said Nathaniel Sofranko, Development Manager at the Association's local chapter.

"Participants can do their events whenever it is convenient for them. The Summer Solstice is the culmination of all the work of our participants. It is a celebration of all the work they've done and an inspiration for others to do their events on or around that day."

Golf is Shawn Bell's choice. A project executive at Turner Construction Company, Bell is planning a third annual golf tournament sponsored by the company's charitable arm, the Turner Construction Company Foundation.

Every year, the foundation hosts charitable events for different causes all over the country. The Turner Pittsburgh Foundation Golf Committee suggested supporting the Alzheimer's Association in response to interest from employees, which includes Bell, who recently learned about his own father's diagnosis.

"During the COVID lockdown, we observed some memory loss and behavior that wasn't typical," Bell said. A brain scan confirmed the father's diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, which "flip-flopped" his domestic situation, Bell said. My mother has some health challenges and my dad always had great health. Now, my mother is tasked with taking care of my dad in addition to her own health concerns."

THE LONGEST DAY CONTINUED ON #11

THE LONGEST DAY CONTINUED FROM #10

This year's golf tournament is scheduled for October at Chartiers Country Club. Bell hopes to best their 2023 contributions of more than \$16,000.

Bell isn't the only local Longest Day participant, Sofranko said. Lots of individuals and small groups participate in the challenge. "Last year our chapter raised \$197,000 and our

goal this year is \$235,000. Nationally, TLD raises more than \$12 million each year," with all of that directed toward Association programs and research.

It's the dedication of these volunteers that makes Sofranko's work so rewarding.

"It's the volunteer stories and their passions that help drive me and our mission forward every day," he said. "Without that we wouldn't be able to do so much for the community."



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LISA HOPKINS
Encompass Health



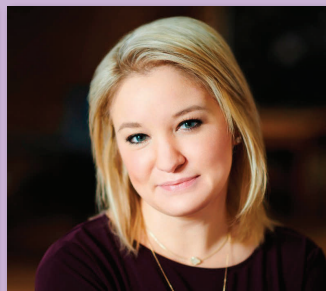
MARIA GRANDE
KPMG



McKENNA GILBERT
Columbia Gas



MICHELLE LIEBAU
Crown Castle



PAIGE MYERS
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