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BRAVE HEART VOLUNTEERS

Compassionate Caregiving, Respite & Education Services

SPRING 2008

P.O. BOX 6336 * SITKA, ALASKA 99835 * 747-4600

Family Caregivers Talk : A Community Meeting to Assess Sitka's Family Caregivers' Education Needs

On January 23rd, Brave Heart Volunteers hosted a very important community luncheon. The topic was Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD), and the educational and support needs Sitka's family caregivers have concerning these diseases and their effect on loved ones. As Alzheimer's is the third most expensive disease in America (costing us over \$100 billion each year), and it's estimated that one in three families is affected by the disease, it's not hard to see how ADRD affects even a small community in Southeast Alaska.



Meeting attendees enjoy lunch while discussing Alzheimer's and Dementia resources and needs in Sitka.



Our own democratic voting process..... place the dots!

Twenty-four Sitkans attended the meeting and voted for topics they'd be interested in learning about and discussing in future Caregiver Support Group meetings. Among the top priorities: Home Safety and Dementia Care, Current Research and Treatment Options for ADRD, and Community Resources and Activities.

When asked about the hardest or most challenging aspects of caring for a loved one, attendees had lots of input: *"Making so many decisions and not always having enough information"*, *"The hardest part was adjusting*

from being the daughter to being the care-taker; the role-reversal has been hard on all of us", *"Giving up life on the sea and other activities and social situations that my Mom enjoys"*, *"Being so far away"*, *"Sorting through my own feelings about being in this role and what it means in the future"*, *"Losing the vitality of the brilliant person (the care-receiver) has always been."*

The lunchtime meeting was both an information gathering session and a sharing session; some might be surprised to know how many of their fellow Sitkans serve as long-distance or in-home caregivers for family members and friends. Of those who attended the meeting, 17 people are currently caregiving, and about a third of those provide care from a distance.

Caregiving, while rewarding, can be very challenging. It was in response to these challenges and a gap in support in Sitka that the Caregiver Support Group was formed five years ago. The group meets at noon on the second Wednesday of each month; since hosting the Community Meeting, our facilitators have chosen a group of topics to meet the

OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE COMPASSIONATE HOME-BASED, COMMUNITY-WIDE, VOLUNTEER CARE, VISITING & RESPITE SUPPORT TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN NEED.

Senior Movement Classes Update

This April marks a shift in the schedule of our Movement Classes. As many of you may know, thanks to a grant from the SEARHC Steps Program, three local instructors have been leading free movement classes at the Pioneers' Home since October. Due to busy schedules and other commitments, two of the instructors have had to finish their classes, but the movement will go on!

Beginning April 1st, Certified Instructor Kathryn Snelling is teaching Tai Chi Chih on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 9:30 under the skylight in the Pioneers' Home main lounge. These simple, graceful movements are designed to promote balance and wellbeing, decrease chronic pain and improve the mind-body con-

nection. Tai Chi Chih is an easy, great way to tap into the body's vital energy, and it can also be a chance to make new friends!

We couldn't have continued to offer these free classes without help, and would like to extend special thanks to all the instructors: Dorothy Orbison, Martina Kurzer and Kathryn Snelling; we'd also like to thank Kristi Grenier and the Staff of the Sitka Pioneers' Home for providing a venue, helping us coordinate the classes and encouraging and enabling residents to participate; many thanks to Gretchen, Kathy and Grace with the SEARHC Steps Program for giving us the opportunity to provide these classes to Sitka's seniors, elders and their caregivers.

Continued from pg. 1



The second round of voting....

information needs identified by Sitka's caregivers. Among those upcoming topics are: "Alzheimer's, Memory Loss and Dementia 101," plus "Managing Behaviors with Alzheimer's and Dementia," with special guest Kitty Maguire (an ADRD specialist from Juneau), and "ADRD Current Treatment and Research" and *End of Life Issues with Dementia* with special guest Merritt Andruss, Geriatric Nurse Practitioner and Clinician at the Juneau Pioneers' Home. "Caregiving at a Distance," which will be hosted by local psychologist Cindy Westergaard is a topic caregivers who have loved ones living outside of Sitka will certainly be interested in attending.

Sitka's caregivers are unsung heroes: taking time out of their lives and responsibilities to take care of those who cannot care for themselves. It was in honor of these folks that our Caregiver Support Group was formed; the group is ongoing, and questions about it or other caregiver resources can be directed to our office.

Brave Heart Board of Directors Retreat

The Brave Heart Volunteers Board of Directors has been the fortunate recipient of two informative one-day trainings from George Hieronymus of the Foraker Group. The funding for the two separate but related trainings came from a special technical assistance grant from the National Faith In Action Office.

In preparation for the meeting and as a good check in with our board and staff, collectively we filled out an "Asset Information: Elements of a Health Organization." This included questions and assessments on the organization, sustainability, staff, board and focus. Important aspects where we need more development and attention were highlighted through this process. The first training focused on learning about best practices for nonprofit

boards. Board roles and responsibilities were discussed at length and tips for achieving high performing boards were shared. The second training was focused on discussing and creating a strategic plan. Core values, core services, and strategic goals vs. the action plan of the organization were explored.

George discussed the role of nonprofits in Alaska and the statistics

**The Core Values
of Brave Heart Volunteers
include Caring, Respect,
Helping and Compassion**

regarding charitable giving here. Non-profits are very key to the provision of social services in our state. We do have a very high ratio of nonprofits per capita.

Unfortunately, Alaska falls behind the 49 other states when it comes to charitable giving. It

is not exactly clear why Alaskans give less, as there is quite a bit of wealth here. It is our collective endeavor to create a culture of philanthropic giving, personal and corporate.

One nonprofit exists for every 110 Alaskans, and this high number of non-profits also makes it hard to find energetic, fresh board members who are not already committed on other boards. This creates some challenges for boards and supporters of non-profit organizations like Brave Heart Volunteers, but with new tools and knowledge from these types of trainings, we are better equipped to meet the challenges.

Thank you George, the Foraker Group, and the National Faith In Action office for making these valuable trainings possible.



Volunteer Profile: Aleeta Bauder

During volunteer orientations, we repeatedly advise volunteers to remember the importance of presence. Caregiving and volunteering aren't always about *doing*, but about *being* there for a loved one or friend. One volunteer who has truly taken this advice to heart is Aleeta Bauder.

Aleeta has been involved with Brave Heart Volunteers since the beginning; she attended the community meetings that established the need for BHV, and was in the first volunteer training held in January of 2003. Volunteering with BHV has helped her to overcome an initial discomfort around elders; she's very grateful for the deep appreciation for her own health and abilities that working with seniors provides.

As Aleeta said, "I sat with my first care-receiver every Thursday afternoon for close to four years, and we would laugh and she would say, 'You know, you're getting just as much out of this as I am!' And it's oh so true." As our volunteers can attest, the benefits of visiting and befriending a care-receiver are what makes this work so precious.

When expanding on the joys of volunteering, Aleeta said, "I enjoy giving back/paying it forward (and) getting outside my egoic self and really being centered and grounded in my compassionate self...I feel so blessed and filled with gratitude to have this venue as a way to learn and evolve my consciousness." She has been struck by the brightness of spirit she sees in care-receivers.



Before her involvement with Brave Heart Volunteers, Aleeta spent twenty years teaching P.E. and coaching for the Sitka School District. She moved here in 1973, and was the *only* coach for a few years. That meant a lot of time away from home, and Aleeta said she spent more money on a babysitter in her first year than she made teaching! In between coaching several sports – she's best-known for her time as a popular volleyball coach; she was recognized by USA Today twice for her efforts – she raised two sons, and is now a happy grandmother of five.

All of our volunteers have traveled a unique faith journey, and Aleeta is no different. "I have never been religious," she said. "But I feel as though I have always been spiritually guided. I practice and believe in the power of meditation and prayer." Aleeta has been to retreats around the world with various teachers, including author and healer Deepak Chopra. Twice a year, she attends a week-long intensive with an international meditation teacher where she

practices energetic healing and tools for transformation.

Energy work and meditation are important components in Aleeta's life; after retiring from teaching and coaching in 1993, she started her own business called Alternative Healing, where she uses several healing modalities. She describes her work as "Psychoenergetic Heart-Centered Therapy," and has studied healing practices in ancient temples throughout Peru, Egypt, Bali, Bolivia, Mexico and India.

Aleeta used her studies while visiting two Sitkans as they neared their last days. In both instances, she said that consistently coming back to the moment with the care-receiver and her breath empowered her ability to sit and just *be*. The last transition can be a sad one, but Aleeta has found that approaching it with a focus on presence has made the witnessing of a friend passing a precious experience.

Brave Heart Volunteers would not exist without amazing individuals like Aleeta who donate their time and energy to our mission of providing compassionate care, respite and education services to Sitkans.

**"I feel so blessed and filled with gratitude to have this venue as a way to learn and evolve my consciousness."
--Aleeta Bauder**

Brave Heart Volunteers Program Report for 2007

~ **Free volunteer visiting and respite support provided to a total of 56 Sitkans in 2007.** Visits are typically 30 minutes to 2 hours in length, and normally once a week. As of March, 30 volunteers are actively visiting our 37 care-receivers.

~ **End-of-life hospice-type personal care, respite and compassionate presence** provided to 13 Sitkans with terminal illness.

~ **Two, one-day Volunteer Orientations** were held to prepare volunteers for home visiting to offer care, companionship and respite support, with a total of 20 participants. Screenings with trained volunteers include personal interview, criminal background check, TB clearance, and reference checks.

~ **Over 2,034 volunteer hours were reported.** That total includes volunteered time for compassionate visiting, respite, board activities, meetings, administration, promotion, support groups and trainings. Over 113 volunteers contributed to this total.

~ **Forty-nine trained volunteers participated in home visiting with care-receivers,** and another 64 intermittent volunteers helped out with special projects, fundraisers, events and projects in the office.

~ **The third annual "Compassionate Care at End-of-Life"** class was held, providing 25 hours of comprehensive training over 8 sessions to 14 volunteers. The curriculum included personal death awareness, communication skills, community resources, ethics, stages of dying, funeral arrangements, grieving and bereavement.

~ **Twenty Sitka professionals,** from medical and social service backgrounds, plus faith community

representatives served as volunteer faculty for the "Compassionate Care at End-of-Life" course.

~ **Completed the second group for bereavement and grief support; began the third group in fall of 2007 which completed at the end of January '08.** The groups in-

There are only four kinds of people
in the world:

Those who have been caregivers,
Those who currently are caregivers,
Those who will be caregivers
Those who will need caregivers."

Former First Lady Rosalynn Carter

clude a nine-week period of weekly sessions, offered by two trained facilitators. Regular facilitated monthly meetings follow the initial sessions.

~ **Held monthly caregiver and volunteer support group meetings.** Over 35 different individuals participated over the course of the year. These meetings included time for personal sharing and supportive conversation between participants presentations and educational presentations on varied topics, including: "*Music Exercising Emotions*", "*Essential Knowledge: The Educated Caregiver*" and many more.

~ **Twenty-four Sitkans checked out materials from our growing library** of books, journals, videos, DVDs and CDs having to do with grief and bereavement, chronic illnesses, hospice and caregiving.

~ **Produced 3 newsletters** with program information, volunteer and board highlights and recognition, donor appreciation, upcoming events, fundraisers, appropriate stories, poems and photos.

The Fifth annual Open House was held on Alaska Day with approximately 200 persons in attendance. Board Members and staff meet and greet community members to answer program service queries and share stories.

~ **Partnered with Sitka Community Hospital Home Health Agency (SCH HHA)** for an Open House and for Home Health Advisory Meetings. We work closely with SCH HHA to ensure quality care to patients receiving services from both organizations.

~ **Accepted as a member agency** with the United Way of SE Alaska and collaborated with AARP Alaska for volunteer appreciation event.

~ **Board and staff were involved with trainings with the Foraker Group** to increase non-profit leadership skills.

~ **Active in community fundraising** and public awareness events to ensure sustainability including: donor mail campaign, our fourth July 4th French Crepe Booth; a booth at the Sitka Artisans Market; and the third "Brave Heart" pottery bowl and soup sale held in partnership with UAS Sitka Pottery Club.

~ **Hired a part-time Volunteer Support/Office Manager** to better meet the service needs of our care-receivers and the work load of our growing organization. Big welcome to local Sitkan Shanna Hammons—so great to have her on board!

~ **Changed our name to Brave Heart Volunteers** to better reflect and describe our program.

Video Critique: "Holding Your Own"

By Donna Hebbeler

A new DVD in the Brave Heart Library invites us to explore our feelings about subjects that are often taboo. For instance, how do you feel about aging?

- Do you know where dying fits into our culture today?
- Have you considered how life evolves from birth to death?
- Do you see birth and death as one part of a whole?
- Have you thought about what is lost as the body moves toward death?
- Do you have fears about dying?
- What do you think the biggest fear is surrounding dying?
- Is there a "right" way to die?

How would you answer each of these questions? Watching *Holding Your Own: Embracing the End of Life*, either in the quiet of the meditation room at Brave Heart Volunteers, or maybe at home with loved ones, is a beautiful, thought provoking journey about life.

Take 57 minutes from your schedule to watch, think and reflect about this transition called death. See if you gain new understanding of the life cycle for yourself or a loved one. Perhaps add your own meaning to the statement "even as we live, we are dying." Come explore this DVD that cuts to the heart of the gift we call life.

Tips for Living With Alzheimer's & Related Dementias

By Shanna Hammons

Alzheimer's is a disease that is affecting more and more Americans. Even in our small town of Sitka, we have seen an increase in cases of Alzheimer's Disease or related dementias (ADRD). Caring for those with ADRD can seem a daunting challenge, yet it is through confronting our fears and obstacles that we find courage. Volunteers and caregivers for those with these common diseases may benefit from the following information, gleaned from our own BHV library.

First of all, it's important to point out that no matter what stage of Alzheimer's or dementia a person is in, his or her feelings are valid. It can be hard as a caregiver or volunteer to understand the reality that his or her loved one is functioning in, especially if that reality is so glaringly different from what the rest of us are seeing. An excerpt from the book, Talking to Alzheimer's by Claudia Strauss further elaborates on this subject:

"One of the hardest things for all of us is to have our fears, our concerns, our worries, dismissed. Our feelings matter. And that doesn't change as long as we are breathing. People with Alzheimer's may have trouble with mental processes, may have trouble finding the words to express the meanings in their heads, but their feelings are intact. They still bleed. They feel pain, embarrassment, joy, humor, other peoples' interest in them, companionship, loneliness, and boredom. They can feel useful. And they can feel useless."

Most of the common wisdom surrounding relating to people affected by ADRD centers on this theme of allowing and respecting the existence of this alternate reality. When a volunteer or caregiver can approach the challenges of relating to someone with ADRD with compassion and patience, it makes living with the disease a bit easier for everyone involved.

Playing with Scissors: A Valentine's Day Scrapbooking Party



Here at Brave Heart Volunteers, we are so indebted to the people who donate their time and energy to our organization. As a way to remember and keep track of all our volunteers, we keep a scrapbook with all of their pictures. It's our preference to have volunteers make their own pages, but since not everyone has the time or inclination to play with glue sticks, scissors and crayons, we hosted a Valentine's Day Scrap-Booking Party to make pages for the missing folks. If you're interested in seeing our work, please feel free to stop by the BHV office anytime and look at our beautiful scrapbooks.



The creative volunteers who came and worked on pages. From Right: Beth Caffrey, Linda Johnston, Jude Reis, Shanna Hammons and Kris Powers.

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO:

DONATIONS FROM JANUARY THROUGH MARCH

Business Donations

AARP
Alps Federal Credit Union
Fisherman's Eye Gallery
Hames Corporation—for all their help with the Coupon Coup
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Dorothy Orbison
Sue Padilla
Mary Ann Perkins
James Poulson
Allen & Judy Puckett
Dr. John & Kristy Totten
Cheryl & Dr. David Vastola
Dick Wilson
Clyde Young
Gayle Young
Leslie Young

In Memory of Edna Lund Berry
Lisa Sadlier Hart

In Honor of Brave Heart Volunteers and "the incredible people (we) serve"
Dr. Marilyn Coruzzi Wise

In Memory of Claude Bryner
Tiffany and Chris Bryner

In Memory of Kerry Chambers
Colin Herforth

In Memory of Christine Swearingen Gibler
Elizabeth Faulkner

In Memory of Mary Margaret Hart
Lisa Sadlier Hart

In Memory of George Hicks
Mr. and Mrs. E.L. Heyburn
Colin Herforth

In Memory of Bernie Ingwersen
John & Bobbie Sherrod

In Memory of Gordon Isaacson
Laurie Mastrella

In Memory of Richard Lawson
Ty and Val Barkhoefer

In Memory of Mae Jean Laylor
Mardelle Westover

In Memory of Monte Littlefield
Jennifer Ihde

In Memory of Mary Longstreth
Jean & Dennis Longstreth

In Memory of P.K. (Kathy) Moebus
Carole Denkinger dba Alaska
OceanView B&B Inn

In Memory of Flora Dexter Peterson
LeNora Notti

In Memory of Kate Pollard
Edythe Burress

In Honor of The Volunteers
Hope Lynn

In Memory of Fred Wilson
John & Bobbie Sherrod
Aleeta Bauder

Plus, thank you for these in-kind donations:
Laurie Mastrella-for pamphlets on caregiving and bereavement
Pat Martin-for donating books for the BHV library

Did we forget something you donated to Brave Heart Volunteers?
Please remind us so we can make record of it!



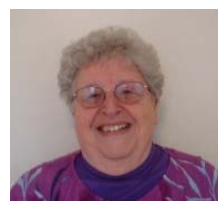
Passings, Partings and More Thank You's

All of our volunteers are amazing, and we'd like to especially thank those who visited care receivers in 2007:

**Val Barkhoefer
Aleeta Bauder
Gordon Blue
Lisa Brendle
Beth Caffrey
Betty DeCicco
Jane Demmert
Cindy Edwards
Amelia Gage
Robin Grewe
Donna Hebbeler
Betty Henning
Bev Holmgren
Kim Hunter
Linda Johnston
Ralph Junker**

**Judy Kearns Steffen
Kathy Kyle
Christine Littlefield
Dennis Longstreth
Jean Longstreth
Diane Marx
Sherie Mayo
Barb Morse
Jude Reis
Greta Ryan
Nancy Short
Diana Stephens
Mary Stevens
Joan Vanderwerp
Pat Welsh
Shirley Winters**

We wish these volunteers the very best in their new homes down south and up north too! We are sure they are continuing to share their warm and loving hearts. Top row, left to right: Freda Aron, Karen Sargent, Mary Hartrich, Candace Vanderbeek; bottom row left to right: Millie Enloe, Karen Boyer (boo hoo leaving May 13th), Althea Buckingham, and Jamie Panzero.



Special Thanks to Ralph Junker for a very meaningful Family Caregiver Support Group in Feb.



**In Memoriam:
Volunteer Ed Benson**



A big thank you to the following potters who donated bowls to the Brave Heart Bowl Sale: Jamie Autrey, Tom Brown, Tom Chmielarczyk, Marilyn durocher, Sarah Ferency, Michelle Freidman, Beth Garrison, Melissa Goff, Gayle Hammons, Dana Howey, Pat Hughes, Linda Janacek, David Lass, Amelia Mosher, Gaylen Needham, Karen Parker, Julie Roller, Robert Rose, Marge Steward, Jeanne Stolberg and Dan Thompson

And to the Soup, Bread and Dessert Makers:

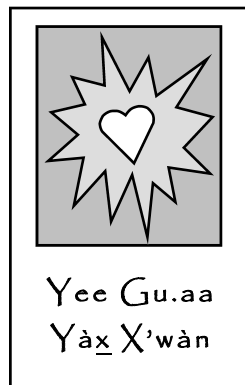
Lee Asnin, Jamie & Pat Autrey, Sterling Barlow, Sue Barlow, Lisa Brendle, Tom Brown, Susan Brown, Jeanette Chavez, Jane Demmert, Tony Field, Marci Getz, Jill Hanson, Marilyn Hanson, Ron Hauck at the Westmark, Betty Henning, Kris Hoffman, Kathy Ingallinera, Erika Knox, Sheri Mayo, Lawrence Poitra, Greta Ryan, Linda Speerstra, Diana Stephens, Steve Warren, Melody Wojcik at The Galley Deli, the UAS Student Government, and Kurt VanWinkle at VanWinkle and Sons.

Ed was a kind, quiet man who loved the ocean. He will be dearly missed by his friends, family and Brave Heart Volunteers. While volunteering, he made it possible for his care-receiver to die at home, and Ed bravely faced his friend's end-of-life transition. We know you will join us as we fondly hold Ed in our hearts and memories. Ed's compassionate volunteer visiting was greatly appreciated, and we know he brought comfort to others with his sincere caring.

And finally to all those who worked at, set up or helped promote: Kate Allison, Morced Asnin, Margaret Andrews, Jamie Autrey, Jenn Barnlund, Sterling Barlow, Karen Christner, Ruth Culp, Betty DeCicco, Jane Demmert, Bonnie Elsensohn at UAS, Jean Frank, Marci Getz, Robin Gleason, Kristi Grenier, Elizabeth Faulkner, Betty Henning, Brian James, Judi Lehmann, Sheri Mayo, Jude Reis, Kathy Revard, Nancy Short, Brita Speck, Diana Stephens, Jeanne Stolberg, Shirley Winters, Sarah Ferency and the UAS Student Government.

Brave Heart Volunteers
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Making a Difference in Someone's Life



Yvonne Mozee, Linda Johnston and Marie Laws catch up and discuss ADRD issues at the January Community Luncheon.



Brave Heart Volunteers 747-4600

Offices located at 120 Katlian
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On the Alaska State Pioneers' &
Veterans' Home grounds

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