

The Alzheimer's Family Support Center (AFSC) is launching its fall fundraiser The Alzheimer's Family Support Center's 2020 Virtual Walk & Give for Alzheimer's. In place of the AFSC's annual fall Walk for Alzheimer's in Provincetown, this online campaign asks anyone in the community to take a walk wherever they are (walking is optional – not required!), donate \$5 to the AFSC, and invite five others to do the same. Having led a similar successful campaign last spring, they are hopeful that with the community's participation, this easy, pay-it-forward strategy can allow them to meet their fall goal of \$100,000 within the next six weeks.

The mandate of the Alzheimer's Family Support Center is to provide an array of support services to individuals, families, and community members living or navigating dementia diseases free of charge, regardless of ability to pay. Founded by former caregivers and residents of the Outer Cape, the AFSC is geared to respond to the evolving needs of those served. By mid-March, when social service agencies were largely shutting down, the AFSC made a rapid and seamless pivot to online and telephonic support, offering virtual support groups, counseling, care planning, education, social and cultural programming for caregivers and people living with dementia diseases. They secured electronic tablets for those needing them, and trained their elder cohort, many new to Zoom and participation in online community.

The AFSC now offers almost twenty bi-weekly support groups, for caregivers, people living with AD/dementia, and those grieving the loss of someone with AD/dementia. They've designed new programs to support professional caregivers at facilities across the Cape. The Savvy Caregiver, a six-week caregiver training course, is being offered online on a rolling basis. Operating from home offices, their clinical team conducts daily online and phone meetings that provide care planning, case management, and counseling as needed. They produce a nightly email blast that reaches nearly 5,000 people, with current information about the pandemic, ideas for keeping loved ones occupied at home, and other inspirational material. They have reconvened an active Alzheimer's volunteer program, providing accommodated tasks for people with AD/dementia to complete at home. This has the dual benefit of creating a sense of purpose while at the same time contributing to smooth day-to-day AFSC operations.

Because of their strong online presence, AFSC's reach has increased exponentially, fielding an average of 12 new people per week seeking support, with calls coming in from across the country. Their online services have been so successful that they will continue to offer them after being able to return to face-to-face service delivery.

AFSC Executive Director Dr. Molly Perdue says "Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the elder community, especially those living with Alzheimer's and other dementia-related diseases, have taken a particularly hard hit. The reduction or closure of needed community resources like adult day centers and Councils on Aging, as well as in-home health services, have added to the

burden on families already stressed from navigating dementia day to day. And social isolation, with its lack of social interaction and caregiver respite time, has worsened dementia symptoms in those living with dementia disease, burning out many who care for them.”

The Alzheimer’s Family Support Center’s tag line “Until there’s a cure, there’s community” has never been more apt, nor the need more immediate. They look to the incredible example set by the towns of the Outer Cape as they have risen, time and again, to address public crises of all kinds, as Provincetown did so valiantly during the dark days of the AIDS pandemic. But in order to meet the growing need for free Alzheimer’s/dementia support services during the time of COVID-19, they have had to replace their in-person fundraising events with online efforts that both raise much-needed funds while continuing to offer meaningful engagement for the AD/dementia community.

To launch a “walk” page you can email to friends and family, or to make a donation, go to <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/alzheimers-family-caregivers-support-center-inc/2020-walk-give-for-alzheimer-s>, or simply text ALZGIVE to 44-321 to make a donation.