

Why I Walk

Alejandra Palacios
Bilingual Anchor/Reporter
Telemundo Wisconsin

Advocating for Alzheimer's Awareness in the Hispanic Community: Alejandra's Journey

Born in Mexico, Alejandra Palacios Perez spent most of her formative years in Minnesota, affectionately referring to herself as a "Mexican-Minnesotan." However, she still maintains a strong connection to her roots. As a bilingual anchor and reporter for CBS 58 and Telemundo Wisconsin since June 2021, she brings a unique perspective to her work. In particular, she understands the importance of raising awareness of Alzheimer's within the Hispanic community. Alejandra acknowledges that cultural stigmas can sometimes hinder individuals from seeking help, and so she emphasizes the need for education and outreach, encouraging early intervention and access to resources. "There are a lot of misconceptions," she notes. "Some people think of it as a natural part of aging, but it's not."

Besides collaborating with the Alzheimer's Association to feature resources on Telemundo, Alejandra has also done stories on Alzheimer's and local organizations helping families with the disease. She has been particularly focused on reaching out to Hispanic caregivers and individuals living with dementia, aiming to shift the narrative around health. "Memory lapses shouldn't be brushed aside," she stresses. Having witnessed the profound impact of the disease on loved ones, she is determined to make a positive change. "Losing family to Alzheimer's over the years, I've seen the challenges that come with it," she recalls. "The experience really made me think about my family and myself in the future."

Alzheimer's has impacted several generations of Alejandra's family. Her grandfather, though she never met him, had dementia, leading her father and his siblings to become caregivers. "My dad told me how he and my aunts and uncles took on caring for their father and how demanding it became." Then, her uncle and godmother were diagnosed with dementia, giving Alejandra firsthand experience. "I saw my uncle go from the affectionate and wonderful person I grew up with to someone completely different," she remembers. "It was heartbreaking."



Alejandra was the Purple Flower holder at the 2023 Walk to End Alzheimer's - Milwaukee County

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Paying Tribute to Those Lost to Alzheimer's

The rapid decline she witnessed in her godmother, diagnosed in 2018 with frontotemporal dementia, was particularly difficult. She recalls, "My family started to notice all these small changes, and finally, my cousin and I took her to get tested. Watching her struggle to answer basic questions about math and time was one of the hardest things I've witnessed." Alejandra's godmother passed away last October.

To honor her loved ones, Alejandra mobilized her coworkers to form team Telemundo Wisconsin, raising over \$ 1,000 in support of the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Milwaukee County. Holding the purple flower was poignant as it allowed her to pay tribute to the family she lost, but it also made her think about how it could have been different. "We might have been able to help them if they had been diagnosed sooner," she says. "Maybe they wouldn't have declined so quickly." Now, Alejandra wants to stress the importance of early diagnosis and intervention.

You are Not Alone

Her message to those experiencing similar challenges is clear: "You are not alone." She urges individuals to seek out support. "Being a caregiver can be emotionally taxing," she acknowledges. "Whether it's through online communities, platforms like Facebook, or resources from the Alzheimer's Association, finding a support group can make a huge difference."

Alejandra's unique perspective shines through in her belief in a strong support network and a tight-knit community ready to help one another. Her advocacy is a tribute to those she lost and the community she wants to help.



Alejandra (left) was joined by her Telemundo colleagues Miguel Ramirez and Daniela Cado. The Telemundo team raised over \$1000.

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