

A Salute to Leaders in Dementia Outreach

Gail Morgan, Senior Outreach Specialist, Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute, Regional Milwaukee Office

A Career dedicated to Outreach

Gail has dedicated her career to educating and creating awareness for dementia. She is a Senior Outreach Specialist at the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute (WAI). The WAI is a part of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health. Gail's primary responsibility is to provide Alzheimer's education and outreach to the community. Prior to working at the WAI, Gail spent eight years at the Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter as a Community Educator.

Prior to COVID-19, Gail worked actively with delivering programming to families through such programs as "Movie and a Chat," to create an open dialog with individuals in housing projects. Despite the limitations COVID-19 has had on the physical outreach of the WAI, they have transitioned to virtual programming. "We try to stay connected to the community as much as we can," said Gail. "There is often a stigma associated with dementia and if we can talk with people, we start to overcome that."



Gail is partnering with the Alzheimer's Association to deliver a virtual education series, "Coffee and a Chat" to take on topics tied to dementia.

The Teacher Becomes the Student

Gail's career in education has helped prepare her for her most important role, as a caregiver for her mother, who is living with vascular dementia. "My work as an educator helped prepare me for taking care of my mother," Gail shared. "When I started at the Alzheimer's Association I answered many 24/7 Helpline calls. Overwhelmingly, families were not prepared for the behaviors of someone with dementia – certain tendencies or when family no longer recognized them. All of these things didn't bother me because I knew they were coming. I'm not offended when my mother calls me, 'the girl that lives in that room.' I am thankful my experience helped prepare me."

Gail does try to set aside time for self-care. She'll schedule a caregiver when she has to do grocery shopping and build in a little extra time for herself – window shopping, a drive – an opportunity to clear her head.

Share your Story

"I encourage people to share their stories," Gail said. "Many times, caregivers feel like they are alone and the only ones going through this. Find a support group, reach out to the WAI, the Alzheimer's Association, your faith group, a social group. Talk to someone and you'll find there are resources out there. You are not alone."

We salute Gail and her work to educate and offer support to those on a journey with dementia.