

Hispanic Heritage Month

An Alzheimer's Journey

Creating awareness in the Hispanic Community

Nilda Manzo represents one of the more than 198,000 serving as caregivers in Wisconsin. During Hispanic Heritage Month she shared her experiences to create awareness in the Hispanic community, where older Hispanic adults are about one and one-half times as likely to have Alzheimer's or other dementias as older White adults. Nilda's mother, who she helped care for, recently lost her battle with Alzheimer's and she continues to help with caregiving for her mother-in-law who lives in Illinois.

"During my journey with mom, I participated in several Alzheimer's Association education programs that were very helpful – some in English and some in Spanish," Nilda said. "Virginia Zerpa, at the Alzheimer's Association, was so helpful and even held a class just for our extended family so we could do it as a family. There are so many resources out there and the Alzheimer's Association was a huge support."

"My biggest advice to is to try to take advantage of resources to help you as a caregiver, Nilda said. "Just hearing about other's who are going through the same thing is helpful. Sometimes you think the mountain is too high, then you realize others are also going through it. Even the smallest tips can be priceless. As an example, I was having a hard time getting my mom to wash her hands after using the bathroom. It was becoming a point of contention and I couldn't reason with her. I talked to Virginia and she suggested I lead by example. So, I would turn on the water and start to wash my own hands next to my mother. As she saw me doing it, she did the same. It was something so small, but so helpful to me."

"I think it's important to expose the Hispanic community to Alzheimer's and how to handle it," Nilda said. "My mom was only able to stay in her home due to the resources our family took advantage of, a strong family network and some outside services. You can't do it alone."



Honoring
Nilda Manzo, Milwaukee