

# Public Policy Post



## Alzheimer's Association Oklahoma/Arkansas Chapter Public Policy Committee December 18, 2008

### Autumn Lights Gala: November 6



*Mary Steenburgen, Allison Hogue (Alzheimer's Association Public Policy Coordinator), Ted Danson*

The event raised close to \$70,000 for programs and services in Central Arkansas, which include the 24/7 HelpLine, care consultations, educational presentations, and support services for families, caregivers, individuals suffering from Alzheimer's, and healthcare professionals.

Dr. David Liu was the recipient of this year's Maureen Reagan Award for his dedication and service to those in Arkansas who are living with Alzheimer's disease. Honored guests included Governor and Mrs. Beebe, John Selig, Chip and Cindy Murphy, Steve Boedigheimer, Andrea Halverson, and others.

*Allison Hogue*



*Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe, Mary, First Lady Ginger Beebe, Ted*

### New Arkansas Task Force Will Address Alzheimer's Epidemic: Broyles, Legislators to Discuss Bill December 9

The Alzheimer's Association held the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Autumn Lights Gala and Silent Auction on November 6, 2008 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Little Rock.

Chairs of this year's event were Douglas R. Jones and Cynthia Orlicek Jones. Honorary co-chairs were Mary Steenburgen and Ted Danson.

In Little Rock on Monday, December 8, University of Arkansas legend Frank Broyles and District 27 Representative Dawn Creekmore spoke about a new bill that would create a task force to address the impending challenges of Alzheimer's disease in the state. The press conference was held at the State Capitol building with more than 25 legislators that are co-sponsoring the bill in attendance.

"The Alzheimer's Association applauds the leadership of Rep. Creekmore, Sen. Horn and Coach Broyles for their proactive efforts in creating the Task Force," said Marisha DiCarlo,

Asst. Director of the Alzheimer's Association OK/AR Chapter, "It is essential that Arkansas assesses the impact of the disease on our state, examines the existing resources, and develops a strategy to mobilize a state response to the public health crisis created by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias."



*Broyles is an Alzheimer's Association Champion and has announced his support for HB1014. The Razorback icon lost his wife, Barbara, to Alzheimer's disease in 2004 and has dedicated much of his time to the fight against Alzheimer's.*

Broyles pinpointed concerns about the federal government's lack of funding for Alzheimer's. During the current budget cycle, the National Institutes of Health will receive \$642 million to invest into research, which is a number that has been stagnant for several years. The Alzheimer's Association is asking Congress to increase Alzheimer's funding to \$1 billion.

"In 10 or 15 years, it's going to bankrupt the government," he said. "If I'm a businessman and I have an office that's costing me so much money it's going to break me, I'm going to correct it. But in Washington, they've ignored it."

According to the Alzheimer's Association 2008 *Facts & Figures*, Arkansas caregivers provide over 95 million hours of unpaid annual care for loved ones with Alzheimer's. These efforts have a market value of more than \$1 billion every year. Approximately 100,000 Arkansans currently suffer from Alzheimer's, a number that will increase dramatically over the next two decades as the baby boomer generation ages.

"It's an escalating epidemic," Broyles said. "What this task force is going to do is study the problem and study where we are going to put the money and where we are going to get the awareness and get the education. There is no substitute for preparation."

Rep. Dawn Creekmore and Sen. Barbara Horn have submitted HB1014 for the spring legislative session. Creekmore is joined by 20 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives and there are four Senate co-sponsors.

"The task force will look at ways we can help the patient with Alzheimer's, their families and their caregivers," Creekmore stated. "We will look for other financial means of expanding research into Alzheimer's and finding a cure."

*Alzheimer's Association Press Release*

### Arkansas In-District Legislator Visits

Dr. David and Jenny Dearman visited with Congressman Mike Ross on Wednesday, December 3 in his Hot Springs office. David is a member of our Chapter Board of Directors and Arkansas Public Policy Committee. He lost his mother to Alzheimer's and shared his personal story with Congressman Ross.



*Congressman Ross and David Dearman*

During December, David and Jenny Dearman also met with Senator Mark Pryor. December/January visits are scheduled with Congressmen Marion Berry and John Boozman.

### Candlelight Vigil at Oklahoma City State Capitol: November 13

On November 13, the first Oklahoma statewide Candlelight Vigil was held on the steps of the main entrance of the State Capitol. Approximately 130 purple-clad Alzheimer's advocates attended the 30-minute event.

District 2 Rep. Richard Morrisette and Oklahoma County Commissioner-elect Brian Maughan addressed the crowd about the state legislature's role in advancing the Alzheimer's cause. They were joined by Christian singer/songwriter Dennis Jernigan, who sang "I Will Remember You." Jernigan wrote the song for his friend who has younger-onset Alzheimer's and the lyrics represent God's message to the dementia patient.



The pre-event media coverage included articles in the Tulsa World and The Oklahoman along with live interviews on two radio stations and an OKC TV station. The staff plans to host another statewide Candlelight Vigil in November 2009 at the Capitol.

### Oklahoma Task Force

The first meeting of the Oklahoma Alzheimer's Task Force was held on December 10. One of the largest focus areas identified by the task force is education – in the medical industry in terms of dementia training and med school curriculum, as well as in the public arena with initiatives such as brain health.

Senator Ivester emphasized the need for impact statistics and solution-based approaches that can be addressed at a policy level. Representative Dank expressed willingness to fight for financial support. Both the senator and congressman and other members were

enlightened to learn that the Alzheimer's Association already captures much of the data that will be valuable to this important task force.

The task force will identify the top four to five priorities that can be addressed legislatively, assign work groups to address each priority and establish monthly work group meeting schedules. Additionally, the entire task force will meet monthly at the State Capitol.

The 2009 State of Oklahoma Alzheimer's Platform is summarized as follows:

- **Improve adult guardianship jurisdiction** which will enable courts in different states to communicate with each other about adult guardianship and determine the appropriate court to oversee the guardianship process
- **Encourage law enforcement to utilize "Silver Alert"** resolution passed by the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 2006 and the Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return program to improve safety for people with dementia
- **Support implementation of training for CNA's** that assure quality dementia training

Members of the Oklahoma Alzheimer's Task Force include:

#### House

Floyd Austin - health care provider  
 Bill Major - adult day services  
 Ron Grant - one diagnosed with AD  
 Rep. Dank - State Representative

#### Senate

Vicki Escajeda - caregiver  
 Lisa Pever - assisted living industry  
 Dr. Chandini Sharma - Scientist who specializes in research  
 Sen. Ivester - Senator

#### Governor appointments

Mark Fried - Alzheimer's Association state chapter  
 Linda Brinkworth - family member of AD  
 3<sup>rd</sup> appointment has not been named

#### State Agencies

Commissioner of the Oklahoma State Department of Health, or designee  
 Director of the Department of Human Services, or designee  
 Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, or designee

Chief Executive Officer of the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, or designee  
Executive Director of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, or designee

*Mark Fried and Michael Taylor*

### Advocacy Training: December 2-3

Our chapter had the rarest of opportunities – two days of advocacy training by Mike Splaine (Director of State Policy and Advocacy for National Alzheimer's and one of the most knowledgeable experts on public policy and advocacy that you would ever hope to meet) and Laura Boone (Specialist of State Policy for National Alzheimer's).

The training was held in Oklahoma City on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and was attended by about 12 volunteers and staff.

Among many productive outcomes of the training, attendees assessed our chapter's advocacy strengths and discussed means for improvement, began work on a strategy planning chart for our visionary / long term / short term goals, and enhanced our advocacy calendar.

*Jackie Kouri*

### Federal Update: November 24

The recent election results delivered a clear message that the public wants change.

The nation's capital is buzzing with excitement and caution. Expectations run high that President-Elect Obama and the new Congress will finally take on health care reform. At the same time, they must tackle unemployment, foreclosures and the credit markets.

#### **Where does this leave Alzheimer's issues?**

The Alzheimer's Association is working hard to integrate our priorities into the upcoming health care debate. We emphasize that reform is essential to restoring America's overall economy and the financial security of Alzheimer families.

We want ending the two-year waiting period for Medicare coverage for people under 65 with

disabilities such as dementia to be front and center in the reform discussions. We are already seeing progress.

In the meantime, one of the first orders of business when Congress convenes in January is completion of legislation that funds Alzheimer research and services.

### Call to Action

Every registered advocate will be asked to participate in a call to action nearly every month, all for the purpose of raising awareness in our community and with legislators, and encouraging legislative action that will further the Alzheimer's cause.

For the month of December:

1. **[Sign the Proclamation to President Obama](#)**. Tell President-elect Obama to make Alzheimer's a national priority. We need 50,000 signatures to be delivered to the new president in January.
2. **Tell others to sign on!**  
<http://alz.kintera.org/proclamation>  
We will deliver this message, along with your "signature", in January after Inauguration Day. That may seem far away, but we don't have any time to waste.
3. Consider attending the Alzheimer's Public Policy Forum in Washington, D.C. on March 23-25. Hear insiders explain the strategies, attend breakout sessions on a variety of important topics, and join others from your state in visiting legislators in person on Capitol Hill. For details visit [www.alz.org/publicpolicyforum](http://www.alz.org/publicpolicyforum).
4. Advocates are asked to send a holiday card or email to state officials, and sign it identifying yourself as an Alzheimer's advocate, caregiver, board member, committee member, or whatever means you are touched by Alzheimer's disease.

## Alzheimer's Stamps



Brand new Alzheimer's postage stamps are now available at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com).

What an ideal way to spread awareness and advocate for the cause near and far.

## Public Policy Committee Members

Mark Fried, Executive Vice President  
Jackie Kouri, Board Chair

### Arkansas Action Group:

Allyson Hogue, Public Policy Coordinator  
Ann Bowers  
Christian Baldwin  
Kaye Curtis  
Guy Dallas  
David Dearman  
Rep. Donna Hutchinson  
Dr. Gary Linker  
Sam Sellers  
Carolyn Singleton  
Melanie Sparkman  
Todd Whatley  
Rep. Butch Wilkins

### Oklahoma Action Group:

Michael Taylor, Public Policy Coordinator  
Ken Bailey  
Rev. Linda Brinkworth  
Dr. Laura Dempsey-Polan  
Dottie Evans  
Kathy Hinkle  
Clarke Kendall  
David Loftis  
Brian Maughan  
Lexie Tice