

Understanding Younger-Onset Alzheimer's disease...



On August 31, 2011, the Alzheimer's Association hosted a discussion on Younger-Onset Alzheimer's disease. "Caring Conversations: A community discussion on the needs of those affected by Younger Onset Alzheimer's disease" brought together individuals diagnosed with Younger-Onset dementia, their family members, and healthcare providers to discuss the experience of Younger-Onset Alzheimer's in the Franklin County community. The event was coordinated by Sara Acocks (pictured above left), an Ohio State University continuing education student in the nonprofit leadership program who is interning with the Alzheimer's Association this fall.

Younger-Onset Alzheimer's disease Alzheimer's disease is considered to be younger-onset if an individual is age 65 or younger when symptoms first appear. According to the Alzheimer's Association *2011 Facts & Figures* report, as many as 5 percent or 200,000 of the 5.4 million Americans living with the disease have Younger-Onset Alzheimer's.

Sara is interested in learning more about individuals experience with the diagnosis, what services and programs they utilize for support and assistance with care, as well as how the experience of living with dementia impacts relationships among family members and friends. She will be using the information from the event to develop a community-wide needs assessment survey that she will be distributing throughout Franklin County to gain more insight into the needs of individuals affected by Younger-Onset. "Many people with younger-onset are in their 40s and 50s. They have families, careers, or are even caregivers themselves when the disease begins showing symptoms. Therefore, they can have different needs from an individual that is impacted after the age of 65," -- Allison Gibson.



"Alzheimer's disease is unlike any other disease, in that it slowly strips away the very essence of what we commonly identify as our humanity. I am driven by my belief that an Alzheimer's diagnosis does not mean a person's identity is "lost". The fabric of our relationships and life experiences shape our identity and when approached with an open heart and mind meaningful connections can be made. For me, serving those affected by Alzheimer's is like being able to give someone the gift of hope. How we respond to the Alzheimer's crisis both personally and globally defines the value we as a society place on human life. As I advocate for those affected by the disease, I remain hopeful in a world without Alzheimer's. An unimaginable amount of support, investment, and commitment on a global scale is required. The first place to start is right in our own community." – Sara Acocks

Dinner for the event was donated by Giant Eagle, Kroger, and Cosi. Special thanks to the Griswold Senior Center in Worthington for hosting the event.