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Support and Hope for Those Whose Loved Ones Have Alzheimer's Disease

Monthly gathering helps caregivers cope.

Alzheimer's Disease not only affects the patients who have it, but also their loved ones.

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[VIDEO: Support Group for Alzheimer's Caregivers 09-30-09](#)

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The stories are all too familiar to those gathered around the table at the Alzheimer's Association office in Madison: "She's totally wheelchair-bound, legally blind, very helpless at this point"... "Every day I visit, she seems to be in a different phase...a different stage"... "It's to the point now where we figure it would be dangerous for her to drive the car."

Once a month, they are brought together by a disease that tears lives apart. Members of the Men's Support Group, whose partners have Alzheimer's Disease, gather at the Alzheimer's Association office to hear the latest about research and services...but mostly, they gather to share. □

Hal Blotner volunteers to lead the sessions. He says, "It does offer support, and it's good to hear that other people are having the same problems that you are. We learn from each other." Blotner not only runs the meetings, he benefits from them as well. His wife, Sue, now lives in a Dementia care unit.

Speaking with emotion in his voice while holding a picture of the two of them together, Blotner says, "She's had a very active life, and she volunteered in so many things. Now it's time for us to sort of reward her for what she's done."

Those who attend have partners who are in various stages of Alzheimer's Disease: "I'm in the process of having my wife kind of go into Alzheimer's, and I'm kind of lost. I don't know where to go, what to do, or who to see"... "She went into an absolute panic, people around us tried to help us even get her into the car. She struck one woman twice, and it was totally a whole new phase, which just astounded me."

Some, like Marcus Marx, have just lost their spouse. Fighting through tears while talking about his late wife Doris he said, "Two months ago she died..and I saw a nice plaque that says when you lose someone you've loved, it's a memory. It says, 'Treasure the memory'...and that's all I can say." About

the support group, Marx added, "It's a very beneficial, knowledgeable group, and it has helped me a lot."

Patting Marx on the shoulder, Howie Steinmann said, "It's a long road if you're out there all by yourself. You can use all the moral support you can get, and these people do that for me."

Blotner agrees that hiding one's feelings is the worst thing a person whose loved one has Alzheimer's Disease can do. "It doesn't make sense to be in denial-- that's number one. It does help to talk to other people who are having similar problems. "

The support group is just one of many programs the Alzheimer's Association of South Central Wisconsin offers. If you'd like more information about it or other programs, [click here](#).

If you'd like to help the Alzheimer's Association carry out its mission of care, support, and research, you can participate in or contribute to this Saturday's Memory Walk at Warner Park in Madison. You can also [donate to "Team Blotner"](#), Hal Blotner's Memory Walk team.

Team Blotner, by the way, was the largest individual Memory Walk fund raising team in the state last year, raising nearly \$9,000 dollars.



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