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**Alzheimer’s Association Selects Local Alzheimer’s Advocate**

**to Esteemed Spokesperson Program***Local resident honored as “Purple Profile of Courage” for commitment to fighting Alzheimer’s*

**Hastings, NE** – **July 2, 2018** – The Alzheimer’s Association is excited to announce that local Hastingsresident, Linda Sheehan Johnston, has been selected as one of eleven total spokespersons for the esteemed Purple Profiles of Courage Program. Purple Profiles of Courage participants are members of various communities in Nebraska who are devoted to advancing the mission of the Alzheimer’s Association. These participants offer inspiration to the public by speaking publicly about their disease experiences, engaging in media interviews, and participating actively in local signature events with the Alzheimer’s Association. The Purple Profiles of Courage participants receive comprehensive training to advocate for advancements in the field and promote free services offered to families affected by Alzheimer’s. Last year, Sam Bonifas served as an advocate for the Purple Profiles of Courage in the Hastings area.

Johnston was affected by the disease after her husband of forty years developed Alzheimer’s at the age of 50. Linda served as his caregiver for five years. After losing her husband she learned about all of the free resources offered by the Alzheimer’s Association and wanted to be involved in spreading awareness for the disease. She now shares her experience with friends and family, hoping to give others a support system as they battle Alzheimer’s alongside their loved ones.

When offering advice to others, Linda states, “Learn to go where that person is. It could be 50 years ago or yesterday. Never, ever criticize.”

Moving forward, spokespersons from across the state will represent various connections to Alzheimer’s disease, including having lost someone to Alzheimer’s, currently caring for a loved one with Alzheimer’s, living with the disease, or having a vision of a world without Alzheimer’s. These spokespersons will engage in sharing their story on social media, blogs, media interviews, and various speaking engagements through signature events such as the Walk to End Alzheimer’s, the Growing Hope Gala, and The Longest Day.

Elizabeth Chentland, Director of Communications for the Alzheimer’s Association Nebraska Chapter, looks forward to helping Nebraskans better understand Alzheimer’s through the voices of people with extensive personal experience.

“We know that this disease affects families so deeply. Sometimes, the disease feels overwhelming to families. Being able to learn from a peer with disease expertise who is willing to share their own story becomes critical in increasing awareness about the disease and providing information about care, support, and research opportunities. It also helps generate greater participation in Alzheimer’s Association events.”  
In the United States, there are over 5.7 million people with Alzheimer’s and that is projected to grow to as many as 16 million people in 2050. In Nebraska alone, there are 34,000 people over the age of 65 living with the disease and they are supported by 82,000 caregivers across the state. Alzheimer’s is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States, leading to 598 deaths in Nebraska in 2017.   
 **About the Alzheimer's Association**The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support, and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's®. Visit [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org/) or call 800.272.3900.

The Alzheimer’s Association Nebraska Chapter serves all 93 counties in Nebraska. In addition to offering free education and support services, the Chapter also raises money for local and national research efforts through the Walk to End Alzheimer’s and The Longest Day events. Staff and volunteers also work together to encourage state legislators to make Alzheimer’s disease a priority in the state by increasing funding for the disease.

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