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**Three Lincoln Alzheimer's Advocates Selected for Esteemed Spokesperson Program**

*Local citizens honored with Purple Profile of Courage for commitment to fighting Alzheimer's*

**Lincoln, NE – July 1, 2019** – The Alzheimer's Association is pleased to announce three Lincoln residents – Emily Gossard, Tami Soper, and Donna Stading-Smith - have been selected into the Alzheimer's Association's esteemed Purple Profiles of Courage Program. Purple Profiles of Courage awardees are members of various communities in Nebraska who are devoted to sharing their Alzheimer's story publicly and pursuing progress for the disease through engagement with Alzheimer's Association signature events. As Purple Profiles of Courage awardees, Gossard, Soper, and Stading-Smith have received comprehensive training to advocate for research and policy advancements in the field, as well as training on how to showcase free programs and services offered to families walking the Alzheimer's journey. They will serve in this role through June 2020.

In the United States, there are over 5 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 83,000 caregivers. According to the Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States, with 698 deaths in Nebraska in 2017.

Gossard and Stading-Smith both lost their father's to Alzheimer's disease. They want families to know about services offered in the community before it's too late, and also encourage families to find strength in memories with their loved one(s).

“My dad passed away from Alzheimer's disease at the young age of 66,” Gossard stated. “I have found strength in my Alzheimer's journey by holding on to the dad I had before Alzheimer's took over. I live with the memories we built. We were best friends – I told my dad everything. Even when the disease was taking over, I continued to engage with him.”

Stading-Smith adds, “I helped care for my dad between 2007 – 2018. During that time, I found strength by engaging with the Alzheimer’s Association, my church, through social media and blogs, and by participating in local fundraisers. I want families to know they too can find strength by reaching out to these resources.”

Soper currently cares for her mother who is living with Alzheimer’s disease. She represents one of 83,000 caregivers for people living with Alzheimer’s disease in the state. Soper will use her new platform to provide advice to peers also in a caregiving role.

“Through the caregiving experience, I have learned that this disease process is complicated and somewhat unpredictable, as are the responses of family and friends to this new reality,” she stated. “I’d advise others to learn as much as you can about the disease. Learn about your loved ones current health needs and future wishes. Finally, learn about available resources and tap into them.”

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,” Chentland states. “Sometimes, the disease feels overwhelming to families. Being able to learn from a peer that has expertise on the disease and is willing to share their own story becomes critical in increasing awareness about the disease and providing information about care, support, and research opportunities.”

To learn more about the Purple Profiles of Courage program, free Alzheimer’s programs for support and education, and upcoming Alzheimer’s Association signature events, visit [alz.org/nebraska](http://alz.org/nebraska) or call the Alzheimer’s Association’s 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.

### **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.

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