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CONTACT:

Elizabeth Chentland,

Director of Communications, Alzheimer's Association Nebraska Chapter

402.739.8637

echentland@alz.org

Six Omaha Alzheimer's Advocates Selected for Esteemed Spokesperson Program

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

Omaha, NE – July 1, 2019 – The Alzheimer's Association is pleased to announce six Omaha residents – Janet Miller, Patrick Bartmess, Stacy Wagoner, Cathy Roller, Alison Griffin-Hunter, and Dana Bean - 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, each individual has 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, and led to 698 deaths in Nebraska in 2017.

Roller, Griffin, and Miller all lost a loved one 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 connect with others to get through the more challenging times.

Griffin-Hunter lost her mother in her early twenties, and began caring for her at 22. Her mother passed at 60. "Get involved with your local Alzheimer's Association and use resources. I was helped when I had no clue where to start."

Roller adds hope, stating “Don’t despair – there are many things you can do right now that will make the experience easier. With good care and help, you will have many more lovely days.”

Miller, who lost her daughter to Alzheimer’s at age 40, wants families to stifle fear through education. “Learn as much as you can about the disease as it will help you not fear it so much. Connect with other caregivers, and know that you are not alone in walking this journey.”

Wagoner, Bartmess and Bean are all currently caring for a loved one living with Alzheimer’s. They represent three of 83,000 caregivers for people living with the disease in the state. They will use their new platform to provide advice to peers also in a caregiving role.

“For families facing a new diagnosis, my advice is to try to start every day fresh,” said Wagoner. “Everyone progresses differently through the disease, so go at the pace of the person. Enjoy as many moments as you can, and don’t take anything for granted. Get support from the Alzheimer’s Association.”

Bartmess adds “Seek support in the community, and commit to continuing your education about the disease.”

Bean states, “Talk to other people in the same circumstance. They will have the same concerns that you do. You are not alone in this situation.”

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 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 or call 800.272.3900.

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