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Alzheimer's Advocate in Waverly Selected for Esteemed Spokesperson Program

Local resident 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 Waverly resident Melinda Bentjen has 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 a Purple Profiles of Courage awardee, Bentjen 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. She 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.

Bentjen lost her father to Alzheimer's in March of this year after a seven year battle. She represented one of 83,000 caregivers for people living with Alzheimer's disease in the state. Bentjen will use her new platform to provide advice to her peers in a caregiving role, and make sure families that are not familiar with available community resources become aware.

"I have witnessed the gradual loss of memory and function in the last seven years from being present with my dad," states Bentjen. "I also have experienced the impact of caregiver stress by supporting my mother who was his primary caregiver. The patience and acceptance of this disease is a very difficult transition. I tell families that they will continue to make wonderful memories and enjoy the time spent with their loved one, even with Alzheimer's. I encourage

people to live for the moments where their loved ones eyes twinkle.”

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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