

Saluting a Caregiver and Support Group Facilitator

Bonnie Cloer and Larry Ulrich, Wausau

Bonnie is a caregiver for her husband Lawrence, who is living with Alzheimer's. The two met in a grief group in California, after they had both lost spouses, and they have been married for 17 years. Lawrence was a professor until 2016 when he noticed he was having a hard time keeping track of things. "Teaching began to be too much for him," Bonnie said. "As his symptoms kept progressing, we decided to move to Wisconsin to be closer to my daughter, who is a physician."

Volunteering for a Support Group

Bonnie started leading a virtual Support Group for the Alzheimer's Association in February 2021. "I had attended the support group and when they were looking for a new facilitator, someone suggested I try it," Bonnie said. "I really enjoy it. We're looking forward to getting back to meeting in person. Support groups are helpful for everyone. You don't have to say anything, but if you want to share, it's the one place where you can say what you think and many people automatically know what you're going through. It's also a wonderful way to get ideas and tips so you aren't muddling through it alone."



Managing During COVID-19

"The pandemic has been challenging for all families who are on a journey with Alzheimer's," Bonnie said. "Everyone has different challenges. For us, it has been isolating to not be able to see family or being able to go out in the community. Lawrence enjoys spending time in our yard with our two dogs. Even in the winter, he'll make a path for the dogs to run."

"For many in my support group, not seeing a loved one in a facility have seen the greatest grief," Bonnie said. "It's awful when you don't even know how your loved one is doing. It's heartbreaking because many loved ones are deteriorating and withering away thinking they've been abandoned."

We salute Bonnie for serving with the 196,000 other caregivers in Wisconsin. And for her commitment to volunteering to support other families on a similar journey.