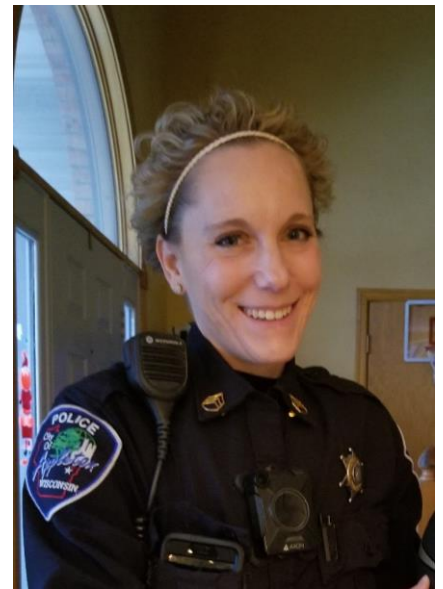


## Community Heroes Give Back During Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month

### *Creating better interactions with those living with dementia*

Sergeant Carrie Peters has been a police officer with the Appleton Police Department for 12 ½ years. She is a champion for education and proper treatment of individuals with dementia. As a law enforcement officer with a social services background, she understands what impact law enforcement officers can have on individuals with dementia, both good and bad. As we celebrate Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month we celebrate her as a community hero who helps protect this fragile community.

Sgt. Peters is an internal champion in the department and passionate about making sure the police department has good interactions with those living with dementia. The police department has regular calls for service from individuals living with dementia – loved ones who have wandered away or a caregiver that needs support. While all police have mandatory training for dealing with individuals with mental health challenges, Sgt. Peters points out that the response is very different between a mental health crisis and a dementia response. A common tactic with mental health situations is to try to bring people back to reality, but for dementia patients this is not the case and she advises officers to “go to their reality.” She is often called in for any dementia-related situations and her training enables her to deal with this community in a compassionate way.



Sgt. Peters has worked to train the other officers in the Appleton Police Department to ensure that they react and respond appropriately to individuals with dementia. She puts an email out every few months and asks officers to inform her of any dementia-related calls so she can assess how it was handled or if there was a lapse in services for the family. If she identifies any lapses, she reaches out to the family to recommend resources to them.

Sgt. Peters is well-versed on dementia and is constantly taking ongoing education on the subject. She's taken dementia courses offered from: law-enforcement (e.g. driving and dementia, etc.), state and county courses (which many business owners take to be a dementia-friendly business), University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh (with train the trainer credentials) and Alzheimer's Association First Responder Training.

As a leader in the community, Sgt. Peters was asked by St. Paul Elder Services to be on a team to bring the Purple Tube Project to Outagamie County to promote the safety of individuals with dementia. As a part of the initiative, those living with dementia would have a purple tube in their home (identified by a purple sticker on

a common spot, such as the refrigerator) indicating this was a “dementia home.” The tube would contain critical information such as health and behavioral history, and contact information. Because wandering is a common challenge for those living with dementia, a photo and historical points of interest (old homes, former workplace, former school) may also be included to help locate an individual if they have wandered away.

During COVID-19, Sgt. Peters has sent extra reminders to the police department reminding officers to be mindful of dementia calls during this time. This fragile community is more at risk because daily routines and outside services have been altered, due to stay at home policies, which has added additional stress and anxiety. She reminds officers to use appropriate de-escalation and redirection methods.



Sgt. Peters has a personal connection to this disease, as her father-in-law passed away in 2019 after a 12-year battle with Alzheimer's. “Before my father-in-law, I had never had any personal exposure to the disease,” says Carrie. “It was hard to see the changes in him over the years.” As we celebrate Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, Sgt. Peters has a message for caregivers. “I'm thankful for all the caregivers who are doing such wonderful work – we know you're doing the best you can. It is difficult work, but *know* that you are seen and appreciated. I encourage you to take advantage of the resources out there to support you and your loved ones.”

This month we honor community heroes like Sgt. Peters who provides support, compassion, and education to those families she encounters every day.