

## *A Salute to Professionals in Dementia Care*

**Fatou Cessay, President and CEO, Cairasu All Things Alzheimer's, Madison**

### **Make Your Voice Heard**

Fatou Cessay is the President and CEO at Cairasu All Things Alzheimer's. She is also the owner and manager of Cairasu Home Care. She has been volunteering for the Alzheimer's Association for eight years as an Advocate and Board Member. Her passion is in advocacy and working with policy makers to get support for Alzheimer's priorities."

A lot of progress has been made since I began volunteering in advocacy," says Fatou. "Many laws are now in place that are benefiting people, not only statewide, but nationwide. In advocacy we look at the bigger picture – education, navigating the system and working through challenges – and we seek support, through policy, for all aspects of the disease."

### **Importance of Educating Legislators**

"Advocacy is so important for Alzheimer's and dementia," Fatou said. "Our role is to reach out to our government representatives and educate them on the needs of constituents and the challenges they face every day. Resources lie with the government, but only by educating them can they fully understand the needs and offer solutions to ease the burden."

Fatou points out that legislators depend on advocates to help them. They may know the issues, but they need educated details about the specific challenges and obstacles of caregivers and those living with dementia. This is where Alzheimer's advocates can provide value. No one can tell the story better than caregivers and families, who have the experience.

### **Advocacy doesn't have to be Intimidating**

"We need more advocates in Wisconsin to help us reach our public officials," Fatou said. "Many people think advocacy is intimidating, but it's very easy. We all have unique stories to tell and each of us can use those stories to educate legislators. Each of our voices is so vital in order to advance the needs of those struggling with this terrible disease."

"I work in a home care agency and we touch the lives of people daily and make an immediate impact," says Fatou. "When you work on policy, it's a much slower process. But it *will* come if you continue to collaborate and work. I like being able to work with people one on one, but I can also touch the lives of millions through policy change, that I couldn't otherwise reach."



## Continued Focus on Black Community

Fatou is a native of The Gambia in West Africa and sensitive to the needs of communities adversely affected by dementia. “There needs to be a continued focus on research advances for the Black community,” Fatou says. “African Americans are twice as likely as Whites to develop Alzheimer’s disease. It’s important that African American’s are participating in research so we can understand more about the staggering prevalence of dementia in this community. There is no cure for this disease and more proactive measures should be taken to fund and advance research, and include communities most disproportionately impacted.”

We salute Fatou and her efforts to reach Wisconsin legislators to advance the needs of those on a journey with dementia.