

Community Heros Give Back During Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month

Valerie Hein Hamstra, Virtual Community Educator, Madison

Valerie started training to be a volunteer community educator with the Alzheimer's Association in February, a month before stay-at-home orders were implemented. The Alzheimer's Association shifted to virtual programming and Valerie stepped up to ensure that virtual education was still being offered.

"I love teaching," says Valerie. "I'm grateful that the classes can be virtual and we're able to connect with caregivers anywhere."

The classes the Alzheimer's Association offers create awareness and a discussion about Alzheimer's and other dementia. Common topics include: 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's, Dementia Conversations (driving, doctor visits, legal and financial), Healthy Living for your Brain and Body and Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behavior. Due to volunteers like Valerie, the Wisconsin Chapter can still deliver these critical classes in a virtual format. Valerie partners with another volunteer to delivery classes several times a month.

Valerie is not new to volunteering at the Alzheimer's Association. She's been volunteering for over a year hosting Memory Cafe's, which are social get-togethers for those with early-stage Alzheimer's. She also volunteers for the Spry Society, which is yet another social engagement opportunity for those experiencing early stage dementia, mild memory loss, or cognitive impairment and their families. She helps lead virtual outings every other Friday.

Valerie is a Lead Caregiver at Agrace, a nonprofit hospice and palliative care organization.

