ACT on Alzheimer’s collaboration continues to make strong impacts

Local initiatives include TV ad, shopping assistance, and dementia training

By Ellary Prentice

From producing an informative moving video to providing shopping assistance and training, the Paynesville area ACT on Alzheimer’s group continues to make exponential progress in their quest to foster local readiness and create a supportive environment for everyone touched by Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia.

The local ACT on Alzheimer’s group has implemented more than 20 activities to help make the Paynesville area dementia friendly and to prepare residents for the impacts of Alzheimer’s, a progressive disease and prevalent form of dementia that causes problems with memory thinking and behavior.

A volunteer-driven, statewide collaboration, ACT on Alzheimer’s is aimed at preparing Minnesotans for the impacts of this disease and related forms of dementia. A local group convened last year, and awareness has been their foundation as they’ve used a phased approach to collectively foster community readiness.

Community sectors that have represented the Paynesville ACT on Alzheimer’s group include: health care, social service agencies, representatives from the Paynesville Area Center, and those who are or have been a caregiver to someone living with dementia. Two gentlemen met for the first time at a meeting last year – both having in common the experience of caring for a wife with Alzheimer’s. They have since become personal support systems for one another – just one example of what can occur in a dementia-friendly community.

Last June, the group began conducting a community needs assessment to assess readiness for the growing impact of Alzheimer’s and other dementias on people with the disease, their caregivers, and the community as a whole. They subsequently analyzed the data to determine the issues that the community is motivated to act on. After ranking the top priorities for community action, they set two priority ACTion goals: (1) support of caregivers and (2) education of the community.

As they came close to completing the survey phase, team members reported that more people began asking, “What can I do to help?”

The team’s ultimate goal is to promote dignity and quality of life for those diagnosed with dementia and to promote acceptance and understanding among all community sectors. Linda Musel, an early champion for the work, noted, “The people with the disease drive us to keep pushing on… Every person has a story.” Their goal is to reach all the components of the community – ministry, public servants, service people, financial, local government, etc. “All of those pieces have a part to play in servicing people with dementia,” said ACT member Mary Ellen Mullholand. She added that their intent is to determine how the ACT group can help these sectors become more aware of what can be done to enhance their performance and make Paynesville a truly dementia-friendly area.

In February, the team moved into the final of four phases in the development of a dementia-friendly area. They have established an ACTion workgroup for each priority goal: a caregiver support workgroup and a community education workgroup. Using creative thinking, enthusiastic brainstorming, and technical assistance from the Central Minnesota Council on Aging, ACT on Alzheimer’s, and the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging, these work groups have generated several ideas that will be carried out during the final phase.

The team is excited to see that their ‘ACTions’ are promoting ‘ACTs of kindness’ in everyday life, which they believe is a sure way to enhance quality of life and achieve a dementia-friendly community. While some proposed ACTion activities must await funding approval, others are in various phases of implementation.

The ACT group has pursued community education in two ways. First, they introduced training to help people learn about dementia and the small things they can do to make a difference in their own community. Secondly, the team has produced a video to educate the community about Alzheimer’s and promote the cause of ACTing on Alzheimer’s.

Other local initiatives that have been implemented or are in the works include: creating a local resource guide; promoting a support hotline; maintaining a Facebook page; purchasing books about Alzheimer’s disease and caregiving and making them available for loan; increasing local support group sessions for caregivers; presenting programs about understanding memory loss, dementia, and Alzheimer’s and early-detection signs; scheduling training sessions to help people learn about dementia; and disseminating Alzheimer’s specific information to the community through various outlets. Additionally, ACT on Alzheimer’s had a booth at the farm and business expo in Paynesville in April.

As the Paynesville ACT group continues the journey of creating dementia-friendly environments for people with dementia and their caregivers, exciting initiatives continue to be implemented across the community. Below are some updates about some of the current happenings.

For more information about local ACT on Alzheimer’s initiatives, call the Paynesville Area Center at 243-4799 or the R.O.S.E. Center at 243-5144. Information can also be found on their Facebook page: Paynesville ACT on Alzheimer’s.
Local ACT on Alzheimer’s initiatives

Know the Signs
According to the Alzheimer’s Association, early detection matters. The 10 telltale signs of Alzheimer’s disease are: memory changes that disrupt daily life; challenges completing familiar tasks; new problems with speaking or writing; misplacing things and losing the ability to return to a starting place; poor judgment; withdrawal from work or social activities; changes in mood and personality.

Dementia Training
The ACT group has initiat- ed training to help themselves and others in the area learn about dementia and the small things they can do to make a difference in their own community. Training will be offered on a regular basis. Some ACT members have also completed additional training, enabling them to serve as volunteer presenters. Training has been conducted at the Paynesville Area Center and online through webinars.

Video Advertisement
If you know someone who is affected by Alzheimer’s disease – be it a friend, family member, or an acquaintance – the Paynesville ACT on Alzheimer’s group wants the community to know there is support available.

That was the message in a video advertisement that was produced by the Paynesville ACT on Alzheimer’s this spring. The three-minute, 47-second video, also available on YouTube, was produced with the assistance of the high school media department and aired on the local Channel 8. It can still be viewed on YouTube by searching “Paynesville ACT on Alzheimer’s.”

Directed by Matt Dickhausen and Amber Barret, the video features several local people who provide facts about Alzheimer’s and its effects. Local people who appeared in the video were: Charles singer (playing and guitar); the late Elaine Houck (rocking in chair); businessman Wally Thoen; Paynesville Area Center director Inez Jones; Dr. Ray Lindeman; pastor Ric Koehn; social worker April Stadtler; and social worker Ric Koehn.

Disseminating Information
The ACT group has selected 25 pieces of information from the Alzheimer’s Association and placed the information in a personalized format at Teal’s Market in Paynesville for people to take home and read. Soon, they hope to include local business cards and contacts in pamphlets as well.

The group has placed 25 books about Alzheimer’s and caregiving on a ‘dementia shelf’ at the Paynesville Public Library. The books, geared toward anyone who wants to learn more about the disease process and professionals, etc. are available for loan.

Free bookmarks – identify- ing the 10 signs of Alzheimer’s and listing local resources – are available at Teal’s Market. The Paynesville Public Library Bookmarks were also distributed during the Town and Country Days grand parade.

The ACT group has mailed letters to professionals in the financial sector to gauge their interest in being listed as a dementia friendly resource for individuals after they receive a dementia diagnosis. The ACT group learned that those with dementia haven’t been a topic that’s been well utilized in the community. “There are people out there that are willing to; they just may not know there are people in Paynesville that have a need for it; because it hasn’t been a dominant thought,” Mullholand said.

The ACT group has also assisted residents in signing up for Codeda, a local emergency notification system.

For a suggestion by Dr. Lindeman, another resource that the ACT group wants to make available to caregivers is a small, laminated card that reads: “Please be patient. We are learning to live with Alzheimer’s.”

Dementia-Friendly Shopping
Thanks to the efforts of the ACT on Alzheimer’s group, volunteers are now available on select days to assist individuals with dementia with a shopping experience at Teal’s Market and to provide companionship for personal care-givers while their caregiver shops. These volunteers are also knowledgeable about the information and resources within the pamphlets at Teal’s Market and are available to distribute them.

The team also plans to promote shopping assistance through the R.O.E.C. Center as something that can be request- ed as a volunteer service.

Awareness Sunday
In May, the Paynesville Ministerial Association sponsors the Local ACT on Alzheimer’s Awareness Sunday, during which representatives from the different ACT groups were available at local church- es to answer questions and be of support.

Provider Visits
Representatives from the ACT group have visited with local health care providers – all physicians, dentists, and optometrists – and made them aware of the ACT group for a dementia-friendly Paynesville. Their hope is that (1) the providers will be interested in their mission and want to learn more and (2) for the families caregivers take care of themselves while caring for an dementia patient. Attendees can benefit from this class whether they are helping a parent, a sibling, or a friend or are helping someone who lives at home or in a nurs- ing home.

For more information, contact Kayla Kildahl at 320-247-9799 or kildahl.kayla@assumptionhome.com or Mike Lamb at 320-349-2322 or lamb.michael@assumptionhome.com.

Local Resources
Paynesville area resources available for individuals with dementia and their caregivers are:

Dementia-Friendly Services:

Paynesville Area Center: 320-243-7705
Senior Dining: 320-247-9790
Paynesville R.O.S.E. Center: 320-243-7705
Paynesville R.O.S.E. Center: 320-247-9796
CentraCare: 320-243-7705

Future of ACT
Next year, the ACT group plans to expand their efforts and will include presentations to students at Paynesville Area High School. At the community meeting in November, the group learned that young people often feel left out of decision making and involvement in what’s happening to a loved one who is experiencing dementia, according to Mullholand. They plan to speak to the freshman, sopho- more, junior, and senior class- es individually.

Mullholand said she hopes to form the first dementia-friendly group in the nation that is entirely run by teenagers. She is hopeful that teenag- ers will express interest when school resumes.

Support Group
Support groups have been expanded to reach more indivi- duals touched by Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia.

A caregiver support group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. at the Paynesville Area Center. All are welcome.

Friday and Friends will soon be offered at the Area Center. The program will pro- vide the ability to bring a loved one with dementia to the center to partake in recre- ational activities with volun- teers. This will provide respite to caregivers in need of a break. Caregivers may also stay and participate in the activities if they choose.

Caregiver Classes
On Thursdays through July 30 – “Powerful Tools for Caregivers,” a class for family caregivers of older adults, is offered at the Paynesville Area Center.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is an educational 8-week program designed to help family caregivers take care of themselves while caring for an older relative or friend. Attendees can benefit from this class whether they are helping a parent, a sibling, or a friend or are helping someone who lives at home or in a nurs- ing home.

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Next year, the ACT group plans to add ten additional ACT on Alzheimer’s communities, according to Musel. It is likely that the pro- gram, pioneered in Minnesota, will be expanded to other states and funded by the U.S. Government. Communities in Canada also plan to model the program.

ACT on Alzheimer’s has also captured the attention of Manitoba State University, which plans to conduct a study using information gathered from the more than 30 commu- nities that have launched cam- paigns, including Paynesville. For more information about ACT on Alzheimer’s, visit www.actonalz.org.

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Source: Alzheimer’s Association.
ACT receives 2015 Ruth Aulick Award

By Ellarry Prentice

ACTions, accompanied by the passion to support an entire community, truly speak louder than words. For all that they have accomplished thus far in their quest to make the Paynesville area dementia friendly, the ACT on Alzheimer’s group received the 2015 Ruth Aulick Award.

The award was presented to group leads Sandra Butturff and Linda Musel on Thursday, July 2, at Veterans Park. Both women, who continue to lead the movement to prepare the area for the impacts of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, were taken by complete surprise when city councilwoman Kay McDaniel called them to the stage during intermission at a concert.

“This is such a pleasure for me to do this,” said McDaniel, adding that it was “truly an honor for me to do this.”

Butturff and Musel were coerced into attending the weekly concert series at the park when asked to promote ACT on Alzheimer’s at a table and to help sell concessions for the Paynesville Area Center.

The Ruth Aulick Award honors an individual, group, or business in the Paynesville area that has shown outstanding humanitarian efforts, especially in the areas of age, disability, family status, marital status, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Named for its first recipient, Ruth Aulick, in 1998, the award is presented each year through nominations. Aulick, an active volunteer, founded the Paynesville Community Service Center.

The ACT on Alzheimer’s committee was nominated for the award by Paynesville Area Center director Inez Jones.

In her nomination letter, Jones noted that a group of 16 individuals began the process of making the area dementia friendly in March 2014, and the group has contributed more than 1,000 hours to this effort since last June.

After initiating a survey process and hosting a public event last year, the committee, which has evolved from the original 16 members, selected goal areas and formed work plans to apply for additional funding, which was received in April.

Since the receipt of that funding, the ACT group, under the leadership of Butturff and Musel, has already implemented 22 activities to attempt to educate the Paynesville community about dementia and have many more still in the planning stages, according to Jones.

“Linda and Sandra have ensured that the momentum continues and work continues to be done,” Jones said.

The group, Jones continued, has brought together a wide variety of individuals from many branches of the community— from lawyers and medical staff to elementary students—to work together in an attempt to help the entire community. They have brought these individuals together to learn more about dementia and thus be able to assist caregivers and help those suffering from dementia feel like a valued and welcomed part of the community, she said.

“Thank you very much,” she said of the award.

Past recipients of the Ruth Aulick Award are: Sheri Wegner (2014); Dan Elliott (2013); Dick Dalton (2012); Darlene Olson (2011); Uzone (2010); Roy Colbert (2009); Pat Liestman (2008); Loretta Thomas (2007); Tom Koshiol (2006); anonymous (2005); Brad Skoglund (2004); Maurice Doddall (2003); Marilyn Pearson (2002); Katherine Halverson (2001); Don Torbenson (2000); Marie Lauer (1999); and Aulick (1998).