

Jonesboro-Sun
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21106



Wilkins to serve on state task force raising awareness of Alzheimer's

BY ANTHONY CHILDRESS
SUN STAFF WRITER

JONESBORO — State Rep. Butch Wilkins is taking another step in his quest to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease by joining the state's first-ever task force to address issues associated with it.

The Democrat from Jonesboro was on his way to a reception in Little Rock on Monday to highlight the 17-member group's goals and plans. He told *The Sun* it was "a deeply personal thing" to him.

"There are two legislators — myself and one senator — and the rest of the members are from various agencies and caregivers," Wilkins said. "Our goals will be to help families and patients alike and looking for legislative answers to some of the problems they face. I know the situation very well."

Wilkins, whose wife and mother-in-law both have Alzheimer's, said he understands the concerns caregivers have day-to-day and plans to bring those experiences to the task

*'It's not something you
get away from. It's there
24-7.'*

State Rep. Butch Wilkins

force. Gov. Mike Beebe makes some of the appointments to the panel and lent his office's support in establishing a Silver Alert system statewide. The system helps find missing el-

derly people by notifying the public, like an Amber Alert would for a missing child.

Wilkins said the alert is for those afflicted with cognitive conditions like Alzheimer's and Down Syndrome, among others.

It functions in a way that is like the Amber Alert that does the same thing for missing children throughout the state.

"I was very proud to see that [approval of the alert] happen," he added. "I had wanted to accomplish it when I got to Little Rock and feel that it will help a lot of people."

Alerts are sent out using media outlets and law enforcement to draw public attention to a given missing person's case.

Keeping his focus

More than anything else, Wilkins said he intends to keep the emotional, physical and other distress associated with Alzheimer's foremost in his efforts through the task force.

"It's just devastating," he said. "You have daily challenges, things that haven't happened before, and now here you are dealing with them. It puts an awful lot of stress on everyone involved. We'll be very active for the next 18 or so months until the next regular legislative session (slated for January 2011) starts. I hope we're a very active and hard-working group and believe that we will be. This is very important to me and many others."

PLEASE SEE WILKINS, A2

WILKINS: Broyles, key legislators are backers

FROM PAGE A1

The state's Alzheimer's Association chapter, based in Little Rock, strongly backed the alert and creation of the task force. The group helps raise funds annually through events like the annual Memory Walk at Craighead Forest Park.

Former University of Arkansas football coach and Athletic Director Frank Broyles, whose first wife died from Alzheimer's, was among the task force's backers, in addition to state Rep. Dawn Creekmore, D-Sherwood, and state Sen. Barbara Horn, D-Ashdown.

"We applaud the leadership of Rep.

Creekmore, Sen. Horn and Coach Broyles for their proactive efforts," Mari-sha DiCarlo, assistant director of the association's Arkansas-Oklahoma chapter, said, adding that Wilkins had been a strong advocate, too.

More than 100,000 Arkansans and five million people nationally have the disease, according to the association.

"When you look at the realities involved with Alzheimer's disease you quickly see that it's something you deal with all day every day," Wilkins said. "It's not something you get away from. It's there 24-7."

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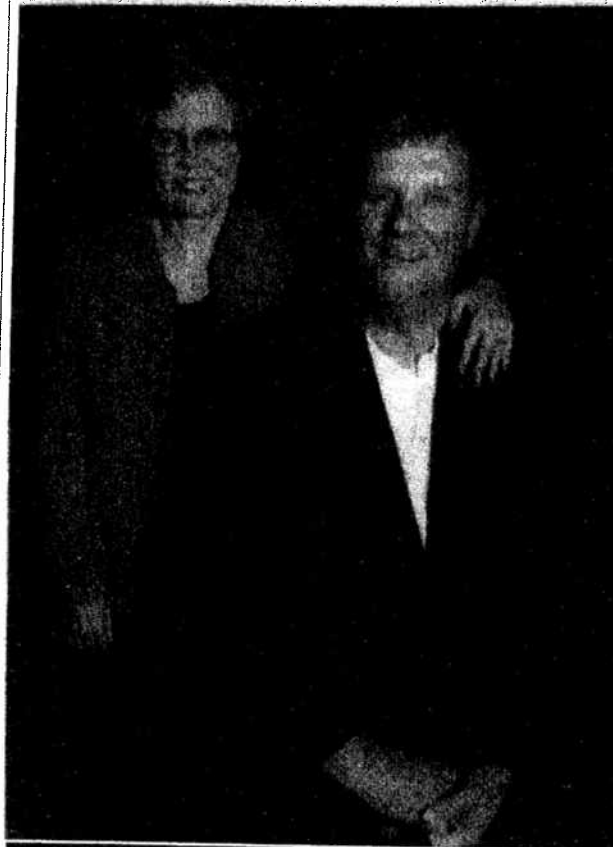
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Sandra Sovick / The Sun

State Rep. Butch Wilkins, D-Jonesboro, said Monday he was inspired by his experiences as a caregiver for his wife Pat, an Alzheimer's patient, in joining a new statewide task force devoted to addressing challenges associated with the disease.

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Broyles talks Alzheimer's

BY CHARLIE GOCIO
The Sentinel-Record

Although saddening and difficult for friends and loved ones, Razorback legend Frank Broyles said caretakers of dementia patients should try to make treatment "the best of times."

During an open house at The Caring Place of Hot Springs, 101 Quapaw Ave., a daycare and respite facility for people who have Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, Broyles shared his family's battle with the disease.

In 2004, his wife, Barbara Broyles, died at the age of 79 after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 1999. Broyles, 84, the former University of Arkansas at Fayetteville athletics director and head football coach who led his team to a national title in 1964, said he is hopeful a cure for Alzheimer's will be discovered soon.

"With research, we have a lot of things going on, but still we don't have a single medicine to treat the disease," he said. "We treat the symptoms but not the disease, but there are things on the drawing board that are going

to help."

Alzheimer's is a progressive, irreversible neurological disorder. Symptoms include gradual memory loss, impairment of judgment, disorientation, personality change, difficulty in learning and loss of language skills.

Broyles tours the nation nowadays, sharing his experience of being a primary caregiver. In fact, he wrote a book, "Coach Broyles' Playbook for Alzheimer's Caregivers: A Practical Tips Guide," to help educate others about dealing with the disease.

He said his wife began showing symptoms of Alzheimer's in the mid-'90s, but was too embarrassed to immediately seek help because of the perceived social stigma - something that left doctors hesitant to diagnose her disease.

"Today we would put her on medicine immediately," he said, adding that "she resigned from everything she was doing," including teaching Sunday school, which she taught for 50 years. "When people withdraw, there's a reason they withdraw."

He said, "Today we would

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BROYLES

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know she had the early stages of Alzheimer's. But there was no dignified diagnosis of it, because doctors didn't want to tell me. They couldn't do anything about it anyway."

He said, "We've got to change that. We've got to get the people on the medicine earlier."

The burden of caring for a loved one who suffers from dementia can strain a family - physically and emotionally - but proper preparation is the key to happiness for all, he said.

"When Barbara was diagnosed, I called my family together and said, 'We're going to make this the best of times. We're going to relish and treasure every minute that we have with her,' and the family did that," he said. "We were positive about everything."

"Oh, we had times when we

cried, times we were worried, and we made many, many mistakes, because there was nothing out there to tell us what to do."

Broyles said the most effective way to help those with dementia is to "communicate love as a caregiver" and "give a peak performance," much like his teams did against Southwest Conference rivals like the Texas Longhorns.

"How do you get a peak performance?" Broyles said. "You prepare them mentally and emotionally. You've got to know your opponent. You've got to know Alzheimer's. ... You've got to realize they're not themselves."

Recalling how Barbara forget his name during her final years, but would always recognize Broyles and call him "the big one," he said, "They know more than we think they know."



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STATE VIEWS |

Silver alert program

Thousands of Arkansans are currently living with some form of dementia, and as our population ages over the course of the next 10 years, these numbers will only increase. In fact, the number of Americans living with Alzheimer's disease or a similar form of dementia is expected to triple by 2050 — to 16 million.

Approximately 60 percent of these patients will wander away from their caregivers at some point, and about half of those who are not found within 24 hours will suffer serious injury or death. If the wandering patient has access to a vehicle, the potential for critical injury — to him or herself, or to another driver — escalates dramatically.

The Arkansas Silver Alert is an important new tool that will help to protect the safety of thousands of our fellow citizens who are

living with one of these insidious diseases. Recently, the Arkansas State Police, the Arkansas Sheriff's Association and the Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police announced the launch of this program, which provides for statewide public notification when a person with a cognitive disorder has wandered away from home or from a care facility.



**Mike
Beebe**

The Silver Alert will allow caregivers or family members to report missing individuals to local law-enforcement agencies, who can then activate the Silver Alert System through the Arkansas State Police. Information about the missing individual will be distributed statewide to law-enforcement agencies, news organizations, and individuals who have subscribed to the Silver Alert Notification System.

The Arkansas Silver Alert System addresses the needs of persons with dementia and their families and includes training of first responders and coordinating search efforts among families, caregivers, and local authorities. It is built on the same software platform as the State's highly effective Morgan Nick Amber Alert

System, which is used to broadcast information about missing children. Both systems depend on subscribers to make them as effective as possible. You can subscribe by visiting the Arkansas State Police Web site at www.asp.state.ar.us and following the links located at the bottom of the page.

I want to especially recognize State Representative Butch Wilkins of Bono. His passion for helping Arkansans stricken with Alzheimer's disease, and their families, brought the need for the Silver Alert to my attention. Representative Wilkins, along with representatives of the Arkansas Alzheimer's Association and AARP, worked tirelessly with the State Police, county sheriffs, and municipal police to ensure that this system will work to protect the safety of some of Arkansas's most vulnerable citizens. I believe that having this system in place will result in a greater peace of mind for all those in Arkansas who are caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or other cognitive disorders.

Mike Beebe is the governor of Arkansas.

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which should bloom this spring.

267-31
Gov. Beebe, Law Enforcement Announce Ark. Silver Alert

Alzheimer's Association Supports Program to Benefit Adults with Cognitive Impairment

Little Rock - Governor Mike Beebe today announced the creation of the Arkansas Silver Alert which has been established through a mutual agreement of the Arkansas State Police, Arkansas Sheriffs' Association and Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police. The Arkansas State Police will host an Internet web site that will provide Arkansas broadcasters, newspapers, and other news organizations as well as the public at large a means to receive Arkansas Silver Alerts.

The Alzheimer's Association commends Representative Butch Wilkins for leading the effort to establish an Arkansas Silver Alert Program. One of the freshman legislator's chief reasons for bringing this issue forward has to do with his personal experience as a caregiver for wife, Pat, and his mother-in-

law, both Alzheimer's patients.

According to the 2009 Alzheimer's Association Fact & Figures, 6 out of 10 people with Alzheimer's disease will wander from their homes or caregiving facilities at some point as the disease progresses. If not found within a 24-hour period, up to half will suffer serious injury or death. Even in one's own neighborhood or a place that is familiar, the person living with Alzheimer's may become disoriented and lost, and 94 percent of people with Alzheimer's disease who wander are found within just over a mile from his or her place of residence or last location seen.

As the threat of Alzheimer's disease continues to touch more people's lives, the safety and security of those with Alzheimer's or dementia-related illnesses will continue to be a

concern to us all. In order to address this growing population, the Alzheimer's Association remains committed to working with lawmakers to ensure that safety issues are raised in the context of comprehensive federal and state Alzheimer's disease planning that better acknowledges the unique needs of the cognitively impaired. The most effective system will include collaboration and cooperation between families, all levels of government and organizations that support local communities, like the Alzheimer's Association.

For more information about Arkansas Silver Alert and the press conference, contact Allison Hogue of the Alzheimer's Association at (501) 265-0027 or allison.hogue@alz.org.

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White

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Many cope with high risk of Alzheimer's

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA - People who learn through genetic testing that they have a higher than average risk for Alzheimer's disease are able to handle the bad news pretty well, results from the first major study of this suggest.

The findings aren't enough evidence for doctors to urge more people to get genetic testing, said lead author, Dr. Robert Green. But they challenge assumptions that people will be devastated by a positive test result and misread it as certain proof they're doomed to Alzheimer's.

"Our participants were able to understand the risk and manage it," said Green, a researcher at the Boston University School of Medicine.

For many who learned they were not at increased risk, testing wound up being a great relief. The study is being published Thursday in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia among older adults, and affects as many as 5 million Americans, most of them over age 60.

The exact cause is not known, but scientists believe heredity plays a role. People with a certain gene — known as APOE4 — are believed to be three to 15 times more likely to develop the illness than other people, depending on how many copies of the gene they have. It is not, however, a sure sign someone will get the disease.

Experts recommend a test for APOE4 only to diagnose Alzheimer's in patients already having symptoms. But a number of companies have been marketing the test directly to consumers, even though there is no cure for the disease or way to prevent it from developing.

"It's available if somebody wants it," said Beth Peshkin, a genetic counselor at Georgetown University Medical Center.

The study measured anxiety, depression and stress levels in 162 healthy adults who were children or siblings of people with Alzheimer's. The participants were in their early 50's, on average. Most wanted to know if they had the gene, and people who already had severe anxiety or depression were not included. All got a blood test that looks for the gene. Two-thirds were given the results, the other third were not.

Overall, the anxiety, depression and distress scores of those who got the results and those who didn't were about the same. About half of those given results tested positive for the gene. Predictably, those who got the good news that they tested negative had slightly lower anxiety, depression and distress scores than anyone else. But those who tested positive were as likely to say they would still get the test if they had the chance to do it over.

The results are not so different from some studies involving genetic testing for other conditions, like Huntington's disease or some types of cancer, said Elizabeth Thomson, an official at the National Human Genome Research Institute.

"It seems to be worse on people not to know than to know that they are positive or negative," said Thomson, director of the federal agency's ethical, legal and social implications research program.

Indeed, in the Alzheimer's study, 16 percent of those in the group that did not get results dropped out — a higher proportion than those who left the other group. That may have been a sign of frustration of people who really wanted the information, said Green.

"Once you make up your mind that this is something you're interested in learning, you really don't want to be told no," Green said. It's possible that stress levels were elevated in the people who didn't get the results, he said.

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Mom will celebrate her day, but she may not remember

Today my mother will rise and sit at her dining room table. She will have a cup of coffee to her right, well-browned toast on her plate. She will read the morning's headlines, slide open the door to her patio so her cat may sun itself and then carefully, gingerly, almost reverently open cards from her four remaining sons.

A bouquet will adorn her table, a similar one in the living room with messages reminding her she is loved. She will cup the petals in her palm, lean close and smell the fragrance and briefly recall life as it once was.

And then she will forget.

My mother, like millions of mothers and fathers around the world, suffers from Alzheimer's.

"I just get so frustrated," she repeats often in our weekly telephone conversations, her repetition as much a symptom of the disease as a point of conversation.

My mother's life is confined to the immediate. Her memory is shaky, like a fog that covers her past — she can recall glimpses but often fails to put events in context.

Shoeboxes full of pictures await their place in photo albums. There she stands with former first lady Pat Nixon, and in another she's laughing with Iowa Gov. Robert Ray. There she is as a little girl, brothers book-ending her as they pose outside their farmhouse. There with her husband and five boys, all dressed in centennial garb.

Many pictures have partial identifications, first names without the last or one person in eight. She struggles to recall who or what or why or when and we go to the next photo where her comfort level

returns as she knows all that are framed by the camera.

"I just get so frustrated," she repeats.

Today she is bone thin. Her emerald green eyes have grayed. Weight loss is a symptom of Alzheimer's and my mother, at 5-foot-5, struggles to stay above 90 pounds.

She has been victimized by every kind of solicitor. Churches, charities and "benevolent" associations all have proven themselves to be far less than benevolent. They appeal to her kindness, playing on her generosity. Financial duty, the first step of her independence, has been removed to the care of an executor.

Adamantly she remains self-sufficient — she still drives to the drug store, the grocery and home again. She gets lost in parking lots. Calling me more than once, tears choking her as she dials my number, one still left to her fading memory.

A neighbor mows her lawn, refusing reward for his efforts. Another brings her flowers, showing kindness to match those who have taken advantage.

Today I will call. My mother will tell me she hasn't heard from her other sons despite me knowing different. Today we will talk of the immediate, knowing the moment, this moment, is most important.

Today she will tell me about the flowers, about their fragrance. She will tell me about her coffee and her toast and of letting her cat sun on the patio.

Today, I will tell her I love her and for a moment, a brief, flickering moment, she will tell me she loves me, too. And as our voices grow still and silence fills the air, I know that the days of sharing my life with my mother are over.

Brian Bloom is publisher of the Courier. His column appears periodically. Any opinions are those of the writer.

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**BRIAN
BLOOM**

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Silver Alert work goal of Wilkins

BY ANTHONY CHILDRESS
SUN STAFF WRITER

JONESBORO — It's an idea he championed when arriving at the state Legislature earlier this year as a freshman lawmaker, and now the Silver Alert system program is in place.

State Rep. Butch Wilkins, D-Jonesboro, intended to make a bill to establish the alert to help find missing elderly people. It was one of his centerpiece issues. And he said things worked out well through help from Gov. Mike Beebe.

"We worked out an agreement with law enforcement agencies about setting up the alert, and now it's done," Wilkins, who represents District 76, said.

Beebe's office churned out the agreement with the state Association of Chiefs of Police, Arkansas Sheriffs Association and the Arkansas State Police to implement the Silver Alert system, which will notify people of missing persons

who have dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

It functions like the Amber Alert notifies the public of missing children throughout the state.

Wilkins said the Silver Alert will also include those afflicted with cognitive conditions, such as Down Syndrome and others.

"I was very proud to see (approval of the alert) happen," he added. "I had wanted to accomplish it when I got to Little Rock and feel that it will help a lot of people."

Alerts will be broadcast through media outlets and law enforcement to draw public attention to a missing person.

For Wilkins, the subject is personal. His wife Pat and mother-in-law are both Alzheimer's patients, and he is a caregiver for both women. He has a hands-on understanding of the challenges facing patients and families and the reasons an alert is needed in Arkansas.

"Pat was diagnosed six years

ago, and it just changes your life in every way," he told *The Sun* before the opening of the legislative session earlier this year. "It's devastating. And that's why I feel the alert is so needed. Part of the alert will be to encourage caregivers — be they spouses, health providers and others — to keep updated photos and important information around to provide when a situation arises."

PLEASE SEE SILVER, A2

SILVER: More than 100,000 Arkansans have Alzheimer's disease

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The state's Alzheimer's Association chapter in Little Rock strongly backed the measure and

supports the new Silver Alert system. The group helps raise funds each year through events like the annual Memory Walk at Craighead Forest Park.

More than 100,000 Arkansans have the disease, the association said.

"I am very pleased to have the alert because of what it will mean to a lot

folks in this state," Wilkins said. "It has already been put to use, and that's the whole point."

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Silent signals

Alzheimer's Support Group helps
relatives communicate with family
members suffering from dementia

By **MICHAEL NEARY**
News-Times Staff

When people communicate with relatives who have Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, they might not even be aware of the language they're using — particularly if that language involves gestures rather than words.

That sort of silent communication is among the topics sometimes discussed at the Alzheimer's Support Group meetings every third Thursday in El Dorado. The next one takes place at noon Thursday on the second floor of Simmons First Bank.

"They can sense body language," said Nancy Bailey, a

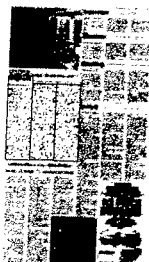
community support specialist for the Area Agency on Aging, and the facilitator of the meetings. "They still sense if you're agitated or upset, anxious to leave or annoyed with them."

Bailey said one goal of the meetings is to help people become more conscious of their body language, or any silent signals they may be inadvertently sending to loved ones with dementia.

Bailey has facilitated the group for the past 16 years, and she said attendance tends to be stronger today than it used to be. She attributed that to an acknowledgment that

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Signals

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Alzheimer's Disease and other types of dementia exist and need not be hidden.

"People don't feel like it's a stigma the way they once did," she said, noting that about 12 to 14 people typically attend the monthly meetings.

When the local support group meets Thursday, a much larger group will be wrapping up a gathering in Vienna, where the Alzheimer's Association is convening this year's International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease.

"We're really looking at ground-breaking prevention research," said Marisha DiCarlo, operations manager for the Oklahoma and Arkansas chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. DiCarlo said prevention and early diagnosis mark two important themes at this year's international conference.

Here in El Dorado, if working on ways to make the lives of those who have dementia is a key goal in the support sessions, so is improving the lives of caregivers.

Bailey said caregivers support each other as they grapple with hard questions involving the sorts of outside help they should seek — along with when they should seek out a nursing facility. Bailey said she doesn't steer caregivers in one

direction or another regarding their decisions about care, but she noted the importance of outside support as they frame those choices. Much of that support, she said, comes from other caregivers.

"They help each other out by letting (each other) know that there comes a point when an individual has exhausted themselves," she said.

Sometimes, Bailey explained, caregivers discuss how much information they should give to relatives with dementia — particularly when it is painful news that may have to be repeated over and over. Bailey said they wonder, for instance, what to say when someone with dementia asks for a loved one who has died.

"The person suffers the grief all over again," said Bailey, if he or she is told about the death every time the question comes up. Bailey said a truthful but less explicit answer, such as that the deceased loved one is "not here right now," may be best. She also said shifting the conversation to memories of the deceased loved one — rather than the loved one's current whereabouts — can be helpful.

"Get (the person with dementia) to share their memory," she said.

Bailey said a good resource for more information is the Carroll Medical Library, at the Arkansas Area Health Educa-

tion Centers branch on 460 W. Oak St.

On Monday, Librarian Vicki de Yampert pointed to a cluster of books — including two for children — and a series of DVDs that contain information on stages, care giving, behavior patterns and other issues related to dementia. Those books and DVDs, she said, can be checked out by the public.

De Yampert also said the library taps into about 5,000 online medical journals and offers interlibrary loan services. She said she can also provide some guidance as residents search out information amid the rich but uneven supply of sources waiting for them on the Internet.

"A lot of times it's not good information," said de Yampert.

Most of the books and DVDs have been in the library for the past two or three years, according to de Yampert, but she noted that "not a whole lot" of people have taken advantage of the collection.

The books and recordings, she said, could provide another channel for information, in addition to the doctors and other professionals that caregivers may consult.

"The more ... ways it's presented to you," said de Yampert, "the better understanding you get."

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Early detection helps cope with Alzheimer's disease

By Lewis Delavan

Staff Writer

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Fatigue was the first sign that Bill Bridgwater had a problem.

The telecommunications executive couldn't sleep more than 20 minutes. He attributed it to persistent jet lag. "I would do 50 pushups to be tired enough to go back to bed," he said.

He sought medical help. After four months, he began stuttering. It was increasingly hard to express himself.

Doctors suggested depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder. "It took another 16 months to see it was a probable early onset of Alzheimer's disease."

Bridgwater visited Little Rock this week to speak to the members of the state's newly created Alzheimer's task force, and to address a medical seminar.

Prescription drugs mask some Alzheimer's signs. "I can speak coherently and I look like many of you here," he told the task force. "I continue to have memory issues."

Without medication, he stutters, can't sleep and stumbles.

He hopes his story inspires, helps overcome fears and promotes early diagnosis of Alzheimer's. "Each of you can make a positive difference for Alzheimer's," he said.

Bridgwater had at least two risk factors for Alzheimer's: A number of severe concussions, and family history.

Plans to attend the U.S. Naval Academy dissolved when a motorcycle accident broke his neck. "I realized I might not walk again, much less play college football," he said.

"When I left the hospital, I walked out alone," he said. "I did wear a neck brace several weeks."

Bridgwater regained his athletic ability, but by that time, major colleges had made their football picks.

But East Central Oklahoma University called the Texas teen. Three coaches came to visit, and he later became a football star at the Ada, Okla., school.

Something good came from the accident. Bridgwater met his future wife. Twyla, at East Central. "She was as beautiful inside as she was outside," he said. "Without the motorcycle accident, I would never have met my wife."

After graduation, he worked for Southwestern Bell Telephone Co., AT&T and later for two start-up communications companies.

The couple bought a Colorado retirement home when he was 48. "It appeared all our dreams were coming true," he said. "I planned to work to age 60, and retire."

His father died from Alzheimer's at 68. "My dad was my hero," he said. "I loved dad with all my heart."

Alzheimer's takes a toll physically and mentally. "When he died he was in the fetal position, weighing less than 115 pounds," he said.

Fond memories of a once-strong man remain. "Alzheimer's is a disease my father had. It is not who my father was," he said.

A grandmother and great-aunt also died from it.

Alzheimer's is always fatal, he says, but his Christian faith comforts him. "I know where I'm going, and I'm not worried about that," he said. "I enjoy reading my Bible, and draw peace and comfort from that."

He enjoys time with his wife. "I know one day I will wake up and won't know a

woman I have loved all these years, and I cherish her," he said.

The Bridgwaters travel the country for Alzheimer's advocacy. Both enjoy playing golf. They celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary by vacationing in Canada.

Their son, Brandon, worked for Sam's Club. His buying team led all teams for Wal-Mart Stores Inc., but he quit work in 2005 to help his parents. Bridgwater is proud his son will graduate in December with a master's degree in business administration from Baylor University.

"I enjoy talking to my son on the phone," he said. Bridgwater knows the number of conversations will be limited. He falls silent in thought.

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Alzheimer's Task Force charged with developing plan

By Lewis Delavan

Staff Writer
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The state's new Task Force on the Effects of Alzheimer's Disease hopes to develop a comprehensive plan for facing the growing problem.

Arkansas is one of 29 states with an Alzheimer's task force. Speakers at a Monday reception sponsored by Alzheimer's Association said the disease is expected to grow exponentially in numbers as baby boomers age.

Alzheimer's can strike people in their 30s, 40s and 50s. An estimated 5.3 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease.

This includes 5.1 million people age 65 and older and 200,000 people under 65.

Six years ago, state Rep. Butch Wilkin's wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's at age 58. "This is very important to me," he said. Wilkins, of Bono, represents District 74.

More than 24 million people worldwide suffer from Alzheimer's. It's the sixth-leading cause of death in America. "More people die from it than from prostate and breast cancer combined," advocate Bill Bridgwater said.

Bridgwater was introduced by Frank Broyles, long-time University of Arkansas athletic director. Broyles' wife died from Alzheimer's in 2004.

The task force was created by Act

92 of 2009, sponsored by state Rep. Dawn Creekmore (D-East End.)

As well as Wilkins, task force members are:

- Cheryl LaRue, early-onset patient;

- Robin LeGuin, director, Alzheimer's care unit at Golden Living Center;

- Linda Kaye Curtis, president of Arkansas Adult Day Services Association;

- Cecile Bledsoe;

- Angela Shierry, certified nursing assistant, The Maples at Harbor Meadows;

- Liz Blankenship, chief executive officer, Southridge Assisted Living Center;

- Dr. Cornelia Beck, director, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Alzheimer's Disease Center;

- Cathy Griffin, Alzheimer's caregiver;

- Angela Marlar, executive director, Golden Living Center;

- Phyllis Watkins, director, Alzheimer's Arkansas;

- Dianna Hall-Clutts, state Department of Health;

- Krista Hughes, director, state Division of Aging and Adult Services;

- David Laffoon, director, state Division of Behavioral Health;

- Rhonda Hill, health policy specialist;

- Roger Harrod, general counsel, state Division of Workforce Services.

Four members were appointed by Speaker of the House Robbie Wills; four by Senate President Pro Tem Bob Johnson and four by Gov. Mike Beebe. Five other members serve on behalf of their state positions.

The task force will present its final plan to the governor and legislative committees before the group is dissolved on Jan. 15, 2011.

Man keeps working on wall

By FRED PETRUCELLI

Special to the Log Cabin Democrat

CONWAY (AP) — Dr. Fay Smith was toying with a thin piece of history when he began work on a dry stone wall fronting his hillside home on Highway 25.

For the five years since his retirement, he has toiled relentlessly, fetching stones of all sizes, piling them one atop the other in a classic New England manner, and building a wall that will likely endure into the next millennium.

Now it stands as a memorial of sorts to his industry more than 75 yards in length, about 3 feet high and about 2 feet wide a project that continues to feed his being.

It hasn't been easy for him, especially when Alzheimer's disease became an insidious companion, threatening his building efforts. But he never allowed the illness to impact or impede his labor.

Dr. Smith, 77, who traveled in the field of education, and was the chief figure in a business enterprise called Educators Consultants, copes today with the incurable illness that is a common cause of dementia. Even though the course of the disease cannot be arrested, he apparently is able to meet it head on with the support of his family. He vowed to build the wall by the sheer dint of all the energy he could summon.

His family, of course, is his chief ally dealing with Alzheimer's disease.

Forgetfulness gradually shades into severe memory loss, particularly of recent events, and in the third stage patients become severely disoriented and confused and suffer from symptoms of psychosis such as hallucinations and delusions.

"I never thought of stopping to build the wall because of Alzheimer's," he said the other day sitting on the porch of his home within sight of his stone masterpiece. Only a slight speech impairment and an inability to recall facts easily reveal effects of the illness.

Pressing on in his recitation, he said, "I didn't get any advice about building the wall. It was fascinating work. It wasn't hard. I still work on it today," he said, leaving the impression that he considers it a virtual living edifice.

Listening nearby, daughter Karen Throneberry offered another, vastly different viewpoint.

"He would go into the field, lift and put stones into a wheelbarrow, pull or push it to the site at the bottom of a hillside and put them together in a way only he knew," she said, a tone of wonder tingeing her words. "It was amazing. I still don't understand how he did it."

Peoples' fascination with stone, its permanence and singularity, and its beauty and mys-

tery has endured through the ages. Man's creativity and labor of love with stone produced the Great Wall of China, the Pyramids in Egypt, temples, castles and edifices around the world and untold miles of stone walls all laid by hand with nary a speck of mortar.

One writer of the past wrote that if "a stone wall a fraction as long as the stone walls in Vermont alone had been built by a king or potentate, it would be one of the wonders of the world."

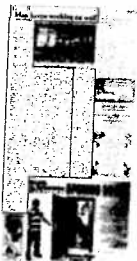
Biographer David McCullough writes that President John Adams described his physical activities in retirement as beginning at five or six in the morning with work on his stone walls. "I call for my leavers and iron bars, for my chisels, drills and wedges to split rocks and for wagons to cart them," he wrote.

Dr. Smith may not have dreamed in colossal ways, but he became a member of the fraternity of stone builders craftsmen who toiled with the breath of craft and ingenuity that was inspiring and humbling.

For the industrious individual who gave the corner of Blaney Hill Road and Highway 25 significance, this effort may simply have been a fervent wish to reconnect with his natural surroundings. His daughter seems to believe that.

Mrs. Smith saw it all from a more pragmatic

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stance. As the story is told, her husband bowed to her wish to rid the landscape of a "horrid concrete block wall" fronting the Smith home.

"She never did like that thing," Dr. Smith explained, "She didn't want to look at it, and I took it down."

So a wall constructed solely of stones would replace it, a wall sans any foreign ingredient to hold it together. It had to be difficult going but Dr. Smith, tall and lithe, persevered. Even the onset of disease could not deter his work.

Today, passersby may see the wall and view it with silent acclaim but others, like Phil Stratton, a neighbor, sees the wall as something resembling an archaeological ruin. "When the sun shines on it, it gives off a brilliant sheen," he says.

Dr. Smith is not without intimacy with stones. He recalls his early days as a native resident of Gravesville, a hoot and a holler from Damascus, when he had to move several stones of mighty dimension on the family's homestead.

Education was his standard early on. He was schooled at Southside. And fresh from high school, he taught for a year in a one-room school near his home. He received his degrees from Arkansas State Teachers College, now the University of Central Arkansas. Dr. Smith served as an assistant principal of Conway High School before beginning his career as a consultant writing grants for educational entities.

Now given to ruminating, Dr. Smith returned to his wall, talking fondly

about it and explaining how he progressed in its construction; (how gravity plays a vital part with each stone sitting on the ones below it to provide needed stability) and saying there was no point in hurrying to complete a wall that will likely endure for eons.

"It has to be done right, or you just have a pile of rocks," he said.

Karen Throneberry believes that the wall represents life for her father so imbued he has been with meeting the challenges that developed during its construction. "The wall represents a relationship," she said. "He loves to work on it, repairing it where it's needed, clearing debris from it and continuing to be involved with it and talking about it. It really is his whole life."



Stone walls used to be more common in the Ozarks than they are now, but they can still be seen throughout the hills, especially in more remote areas.

FILE

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ALZHEIMER'S REMAINS UNDETECTED IN MAJORITY OF CASES
*As 10 Million Baby Boomers Develop Alzheimer's,
Early Detection of the Disease Becomes Critical to Future Planning*

(Little Rock, AR)— Current data suggests that less than 35 percent of people with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias have a diagnosis of the condition in their medical record. Alzheimer's is a fatal brain disease that gets worse over time and causes changes in memory, thinking and reasoning. While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, early detection and diagnosis is critical to ensure that the more than 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's have the power to plan their own healthcare and future.

"Memory loss that disrupts everyday life such as forgetting recently learned information to the point of asking for the same information over and over or relying on memory aides is *not* a typical part of aging. It may be a sign of Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia," said Marisha DiCarlo, Asst. Director at the Oklahoma and Arkansas Chapter Alzheimer's Association. "By getting diagnosed late in the progression of the disease, opportunities are being missed to make key decisions about treatment, care and future planning. Being diagnosed early is vital to receiving the best help and care possible."

There are many physical, emotional and social benefits of early detection, diagnosis and intervention for people with Alzheimer's and their caregivers. People who receive an early diagnosis of Alzheimer's are empowered to:

- Participate in decisions about treatment and care.
- Access community resources through the Alzheimer's Association or other organizations to find information and support.
- Plan for future care options, including identifying social and community resources to support independence as long as possible.
- Seek prescribed medication that can provide some relief.
- Participate in Alzheimer's clinical studies to take greater control of their healthcare and benefit future generations.

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Family members and friends of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's are empowered to:

- Plan together for the future
- Learn the signs to watch for and how treatment can help.
- Identify ways to adapt activities to promote existing skills and interests of loved one with dementia.
- Discover how to care for someone with Alzheimer's, as they progress.
- Learn strategies for talking to physicians.
- Reduce stress by connecting with the Alzheimer's Association and other community resources.
- Find resources to help assist with the daily tasks that become challenging and time-consuming during long-term caregiving.

The public recognizes the urgency of early detection of Alzheimer's disease. In 2008, Early Detection Matters was selected as the winner in the American Express Members Project competition. With the help of the \$1.5 million award from American Express, the Alzheimer's Association is implementing a national education campaign. The *Know the 10 Signs: Early Detection Matters* campaign will promote public understanding of the disease, increase awareness of the benefits of Alzheimer's early detection and increase the number of people talking to their doctors about warning signs.

For more information on the benefits of early detection of Alzheimer's disease, visit the Alzheimer's Association at www.alz.org/10signs or call the toll-free line, 877-IS IT ALZ. You may also contact the Alzheimer's Association at www.alz.org/alzokar or by phone in the Little Rock office at 501-265-0027.

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The Alzheimer's Association is the largest voluntary health organization in the country with the dual mission of conquering Alzheimer's disease through research and enhancing care and support for people with the disease, their families, and caregivers. The Association provides a 24-hour Helpline (1-800-272-3900), support groups, education programs, care consultation, information and referral, Safe Return (a national program to help find people with dementia who become lost). For more information about Alzheimer's disease visit www.alz.org.



Alzheimer's bill would aid fight

While we in Northeast Arkansas have had some differences with Razorback icon Frank Broyles over his scheduling policies for the University of Arkansas, we have no hesitation about joining him in the fight against Alzheimer's disease. Coach Broyles' first wife, Barbara, died after years of suffering from Alzheimer's, and since then he has devoted much of his time to fighting the disease.

Toward that end, Broyles and others on Monday announced a new initiative in the form of House Bill 1014, subtitled "An Act to Establish the Task Force on the Effect of Alzheimer's Disease in Arkansas."

The primary sponsor of the pre-filed bill is state Rep. Dawn Creekmore, D-Hensley, and the newest Jonesboro lawmaker, Rep.-elect Butch Wilkins, is a co-sponsor.

The bill would establish a 16-member task force to:

- assess the current and future impact of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia on residents of the state;
- examine the existing industries, services and resources available to people with Alzheimer's, as well as their families and caregivers; and
- develop a strategy to mobilize a state response to the public health crisis created by Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

Calling it an "escalating epidemic," Marisha DiCarlo, assistant director of the Alzheimer's Association Oklahoma-Arkansas Chapter, said Monday, "It is essential that Arkansas assesses the impact of the disease on our state, examines the existing resources and develops a strategy to mobilize a state response to the public health crisis created by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias."

As Broyles pointed out, the federal government has apparently decided that Alzheimer's is not a priority. During the current budget cycle the National Institutes of Health will receive \$642 million to invest into research, a number that has been stagnant for several years. The Alzheimer's Association is asking Congress to increase Alzheimer's funding to \$1 billion.

While saving money on Alzheimer's research now, the government is only positioning the country for a crisis ahead. With Americans living longer, cases of Alzheimer's and other dementia are becoming much more common, and those afflicted with such diseases require almost constant care.

"In 10 or 15 years it's going to bankrupt the government," Broyles said. "If I'm a businessman and I have an office that's costing me so much money it's going to break me, I'm going to correct it. But in Washington they've ignored it."

HB1014 asserts that more than 5 million Americans now have Alzheimer's disease, that it is the most common form of dementia and already the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. According to the Alzheimer's Association, approximately 100,000 Arkansans currently suffer from Alzheimer's, and caregivers provide more than 95 million hours of unpaid annual care for loved ones with Alzheimer's. That care has a market value in Arkansas alone of more than \$1 billion per year, and the number of people afflicted with the disease is expected to increase dramatically over the next few years as the baby boom generation ages.

The emotional impact for caregivers is beyond our ability to measure.

No cure for the disease is known, but HB1014 says that treatments for the symptoms used in conjunction with appropriate services and support can improve the quality of life for those suffering from the disease.

Arkansas can't fight Alzheimer's alone, but this task force could be a good start in calling greater attention to a problem that can only get worse unless we take it more seriously on a national basis.

—Roy Ockert Jr., The Jonesboro Sun

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HAVING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE 31

BY DANIEL J. VANCE



Often, one column I write leads to others.

Barbara Toney reads this column in the *Lebanon Reporter*

(Indiana). She emailed recently, asking if she could correspond with a person I had featured a month ago who was heavily involved in caring for his father with Alzheimer's disease.

After learning she had an interesting story, I interviewed her, too.

The Alzheimer's Association website says this progressive, gradual-onset, fatal brain disease affects five million Americans. It causes memory, thinking, and behavior difficulties, and is our nation's sixth-leading cause of death.

"About five years ago, I began noticing his short-term memory problems first," said 71-year-old Toney of her husband, Tom. "He'd ask what day it was two or three times a

day. Then he would go down to his woodworking shed and not remember what he was supposed to do when he got there."

When Toney sought treatment for him, for whatever reason, one doctor after another ignored Alzheimer's disease as a possible cause and began zeroing in instead on major depression, which Tom had experienced since 1970 after his son's death.

"But over all those years, I'd been around him enough to know there was a difference between the depression and these other symptoms," said Toney, a former medical transcriptionist.

She added, "Then he started having panic attacks. He knew something was wrong, didn't know how to voice it, and just retreated. He'd always been a people person." To complicate matters, Tom also had rheumatoid arthritis and had survived 15 surgeries in life, including two for cancer.

Three years ago, they moved to Lebanon, Indiana, to a place "where the (complex owners) take care of every-

thing," she said. Tom was no longer able to do outdoor tasks at their old home. After the move, his mental confusion worsened.

Again, along the way, at least four doctors had failed to diagnose her husband with anything other than major depression. She finally grabbed a doctor's attention after learning more about Alzheimer's disease herself, and when Tom verbally began demanding an answer to his difficulties.

This doctor eventually diagnosed Tom with Alzheimer's disease and prescribed medicine. "Two weeks later, I began seeing a huge change in him," she said. "He still has short-term memory problems, but his speech is better now and he can get his words out."

She advised people frustrated by doctors to never give up hope.

You may contact Daniel J. Vance at www.danieljvance.com [All American Foods and Blue Valley Sod made this column possible.]

Advocate Profile: Christian Baldwin

My mother, Jan Baldwin, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2001 at the age of 57, but looking back, she showed signs of the disease as early as 1998. Mom was truly the model Christian citizen; an exemplary mother, wife, and friend to many. Selfless, she always cared about others and was the first to have a pound cake ready for someone in need of a little encouragement!

Mom spent most of her adult life in Magnolia, Arkansas and taught fifth grade Sunday school. She participated in PPO, Junior League, and countless other committees and charitable groups. The community knew that they could count on mom and she never let anyone down.

As mom began to decline in health, she was very scared and she couldn't understand why simple tasks like balancing the checkbook and keeping track of time were becoming difficult for her. Interestingly, after foot surgery in 1999, her rapid decline was accelerated. Thanksgiving the same year, she forgot to cook a meal and it bothered her greatly.

Mom loved everyone with so much energy and passion. She was a true love for all. I recently ran into an old acquaintance that told me how much my mom meant to him. Apparently, about 15 years ago, he had some problems with drugs and depression. I had no idea at the time, but he told me how mom would call him and encourage him and tell him that she was praying for him. He told me that her encouragement and prayer meant more to him than anything else he received for treatment.

My mom currently resides in a nursing home facility in Little Rock, and she doesn't recognize us or have the ability to eat or walk but her true spirit lives on and she will always be a great example to many.

Being an Advocate for Alzheimer's Disease is nothing compared to what mom would have done. In a small way, however, it helps give tribute to the first woman that I loved and honor her by sharing her story with others.



For more information about this profile contact Allison Hogue of the Alzheimer's Association at (501) 265-0027 or allison.hogue@alz.org.

