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The Alzheimer's Association – Greater Illinois Chapter to Honor November as National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month

There are more than half a million people affected by Alzheimer's disease in Illinois.

CHICAGO, IL---In 1983, President Ronald Regan declared the month of November to be Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month. In honor of this prestigious declaration the Alzheimer's Association – Greater Illinois Chapter will be featuring several programs to help Alzheimer's caregivers.

"Caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease poses special challenges and increasing levels of care that can be taxing on the caregiver's health," said Tom Molony, Director of Communications for the Chapter. "In an effort to help caregivers provide effective care for their loved one the Greater Illinois Chapter redesigned the Alzheimer's Caregiver Series."

This new and innovative program focuses on tips and tricks for caregivers and relates situations to everyday life. The four part series focuses on the areas of Memory Loss, Understanding and Responding to People With Dementia, Building Caregiver Skills to Manage Stress and Making Meaningful Memories. The new Alzheimer's Caregiver Series will benefit new and returning caregivers alike.

According to the Alzheimer's Association 2008 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures report, more than 40 percent of the 10 million American unpaid caregivers rate the emotional stress of caregiving as high or very high. Additionally, caregivers for someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia are more likely than non-caregivers to report that their health is fair or poor.

During November, the Alzheimer's Association is helping to relieve the physical and emotional stress these caregivers experience with the introduction of a new resource – Caregiver Stress Check.

The Caregiver Stress Check is a first-of-its-kind, interactive quiz that helps caregivers identify their symptoms of stress and provides them with a tailored list of helpful referrals and resources. Check out the quiz starting November 1 at www.alz.org. Stress check questions include simple statements such as:

- Feeling like I have to do it all myself because no one else cares about my family members like I do and feeling that I should be doing more.
- Withdrawal from family, friends and activities that I used to enjoy.
- Worry about the person I care for being safe.
- Anxiety about money and health care expenses.

When caregivers answer “yes” to stress symptoms, they are lead to Alzheimer’s Association resources designed to alleviate their specific issues. For example, if the caregiver worries about the safety of the person they care for they might be directed to MedicAlert® + Alzheimer’s Association Safe Return®, a national program to combat wandering.

National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month is also the time to celebrate and use the newly unveiled Alzheimer’s Awareness Commemorative stamp recently issued by the U.S. Postal Service. In recognition of the growing number of people affected by this devastating disease the U.S. postal services has developed a postage stamp to honor the more than 5.2 million Americans living with Alzheimer’s disease with 210,000 in Illinois alone and their caregivers.

Undoubtedly, we all know someone who has been affected by Alzheimer’s. A wonderful way to show you care during National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month is to continue to make donations to your local Memory Walk. The 2008 Greater Illinois Chapter Memory Walk sites can be found at www.alz.org/illinois (click on the Memory Walk tab).

If you would like to know more about programs, services, Memory Walk, the Alzheimer’s disease stamp or National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness Month please visit www.alz.org/illinois or call our 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.

About the Alzheimer’s Association - The Alzheimer’s Association, the world leader in Alzheimer research and support, is the largest voluntary health organization dedicated to finding prevention methods, treatments and cure for Alzheimer’s. Since 1980, the donor-supported, nonprofit Alzheimer’s Association has provided reliable information and care consultation; created supportive services for families; increased funding for dementia research; and influenced public policy changes. **The Greater Illinois Chapter** serves dozens of counties with offices in Bloomington, Carterville, Chicago, Joliet, Rockford and Springfield. For more information, call our Helpline at 800-272-3900 or visit www.alz.org/illinois.

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