

AFA Teens Wins Award for Innovations in Caregiving

AFA Teens, a division of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA), just got a huge pat on the back: it was named a winner of the prestigious Rosalinde Gilbert Innovations in Alzheimer's disease Caregiving Legacy Award.

Since it was formed in 2002, AFA Teens has helped countless teens across the country learn about Alzheimer's disease, connect with other teens facing this crisis, and engage them in awareness-raising and other volunteer efforts in their communities. The \$20,000 award will help AFA expand the reach of the organization and assist even more teens.

"Receiving this award reinforces the value of programming for this age group. We are committed to serving this often overlooked population, many of whom are devoted caregivers themselves," said Eric J. Hall, AFA's president and chief executive officer.



Apply for AFA Teens Advisory Board

If you'd like to help guide the future of AFA Teens, now is the time to get involved. AFA Teens is currently accepting [applications](#) for the AFA Teens Advisory Board.

In addition to helping to steer the future direction of AFA Teens, the advisory board provides teens with an opportunity to build strong leadership skills, offer insight to AFA about the needs of young people as they relate to Alzheimer's disease, and give back even more to the Alzheimer's community. This year's deadline to apply for the one-year term is February 28, 2011.

AFA Announces Video Contest Winner

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) this week announced the winner and runners-up of its inaugural AFA Teens Video Competition. Margaret Yan of Orlando, FL was named the 2010 grand prize winner and received a \$500 prize, and runners-up Samantha DeMaria, Carmel, IN, and Melissa Phillips, Salisbury, NC, each received a \$250 prize.

Offered through the AFA Teens branch, the annual AFA Teens Video Competition is part of AFA's effort to provide a creative outlet for teenagers coping with Alzheimer's disease and to engage the younger generation in this important cause.

Yan's love for her grandmother, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease a few years ago, inspired her to enter the competition.

"Alzheimer's disease impacts everyone, not only the one diagnosed with the disease," said Yan, 17. "In my video, I was trying to symbolically capture the hopelessness that a family member or a friend might feel after losing their loved one to Alzheimer's disease." Making videos and writing poetry are two of Yan's favorite pastimes.

The winning videos have been posted to www.afateens.org.

Learn About Sports-Related Head Injuries



Play sports? Millions do, and, for them, sports-related head injuries are a very real concern. AFA Teens recently added a section about this topic on its Web site in order to educate teen athletes and their families about the risk of sports-related head injuries, and the steps coaches, policymakers, families and players themselves can take to protect the brains of student athletes.

Visit www.afateens.org to learn more, view an easy-to-use checklist, read a blog post by a former University of Pennsylvania football player, and get links to additional resources. The [latest issue of care ADvantage](#), AFA's free magazine for caregivers, also includes an article on this issue.

'Together for Care' Telethon Highlights Young Onset Alzheimer's Disease

For teens Starr and Jonathan Montalvo, Young Onset Alzheimer's Disease is all too real: their dad was diagnosed with this rarer form of the brain disorder when he was just 46 years old.

The siblings and their parents shared their heartfelt story on AFA's 'Together for Care' Telethon, which aired on local NBC stations in major markets last December. The first-of-its kind show was designed to educate, entertain and engage viewers, heighten awareness of the urgency of care and cure, and raise funds to meet the needs of the growing number of people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

The Montalvo family's experience brings home the reality of the disease, especially its impact on younger families. [Watch Their Story!](#)



Learn About Sports-Related Head Injuries

In Washington, D.C....

Last October, Katherine Henley of Phoenix, the 2010 AFA Teens for Alzheimer's Awareness College Scholarship winner, spoke before 75 attendees at a USAgainstAlzheimer's briefing held in Washington D.C. to help meet its goal of mobilizing Americans to stop Alzheimer's disease by 2020.

The Colorado State University student shared her experience in coping with the loss of her father to young onset Alzheimer's disease, which affects individuals in their 30s, 40s and 50s. Her father was diagnosed at age 41 and passed away three years later.

In addition to Henley, the speakers were Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (Ret.), Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Nobel Prize winner Stan Prusine.

In her heartfelt address, Henley said, "The face of Alzheimer's disease is changing. It's becoming more and more prominent in younger families. To most, my family's experience with Alzheimer's disease is tragic but novel. Assumptions that Alzheimer's disease is only affecting older generations is completely wrong. It can and does affect younger generations like my father and my uncle. Something needs to be done with Alzheimer's research and it needs to be done now, or otherwise stories like mine won't be so novel anymore."

In Massachusetts...

When Marinna Edmond of Seekonk, MA first found out that her grandfather was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, she wanted to learn how other teens had reacted to similar news. This is when she came across AFA Teens.

The help she got from AFA Teens prompted her to want to educate others both about the disease and the teens division. Acting on that, Edmond recently held a fundraising dinner to benefit AFA and wove her personal story into the event to make it even more heartfelt. Her invitation included a letter that explained how hard it has been for her family to care for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease, and her presentation at the dinner noted what it had felt like the first time her grandfather forgot her name. Edmond's event raised more than \$400.

In California...

Nicole Chang of Monterey, CA was inspired to get involved with AFA Teens as a result of the close relationship she had with her grandmother, who passed away from Alzheimer's disease in the fall of 2009.

Channeling her emotions into positive action, she similarly decided to host a fundraising dinner for AFA-but with a little different twist. She opted for a spaghetti buffet and held a raffle; the event was her high school senior project.

"I wanted to keep it simple and elegant, just like my grandma," said Chang, who garnered nearly \$600.

News Update

• **Older adults who walk may face less brain atrophy ...**A section of the brain important for memory grew by two percent among a group of 60 people aged 55 to 80 who were sedentary at onset but then carried a brisk walking program for 40 minutes a day three days a week for a year. In contrast, a group of 60 older adults who were also sedentary at onset but only did stretching and toning exercises had brain atrophy. [Read More...](#)

• **Good cholesterol may be associated with a decreased risk for Alzheimer's disease...**In a recent study of 1,130 older adults free of cognitive impairment at baseline, participants with the highest levels of HDL or good cholesterol were 60 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease after four years of follow-up. [Read More...](#)

• **Music exercise programs may help reduce falls among older adults...**A music-based exercise program for older adults led to improved gait and balance and reduced risk of falling among older adults in a study of mostly women who were 75 years old on average. Meanwhile a second and separate study found that a multimedia education program failed to reduce the rate of falls among hospitalized older adults, and particularly among people with cognitive impairment. [Read More...](#)

• **Researchers find link between Type 2 diabetes and Alzheimer's disease...**A music-based exercise program for older adults led to improved gait and balance and reduced risk of falling among older adults in a study of mostly women who were 75 years old on average. Meanwhile a second and separate study found that a multimedia education program failed to reduce the rate of falls among hospitalized older adults, and particularly among people with cognitive impairment. [Read More...](#)

• **Friends and family offer insight into signs of Alzheimer's disease...**Using a two-minute questionnaire called the Ascertain Dementia 8 (AD8), researchers found that a friend or family member of an individual showing signs of dementia can help provide valuable insight into that person's mental abilities. They concluded that the information they obtained about the person's changes in everyday performance were in sync with results from spinal fluid tests and brain scans that detected indicators for Alzheimer's disease, and appeared to be more beneficial than traditional cognitive tests. [Read More...](#)

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Teens Making a Difference

News Update

"Memory Cookbook"

AFA is collecting recipes for a "Memory Cookbook" on behalf of one of its teen advocates. The teen will create a heartfelt collection of family recipes in honor or memory of teens' loved ones with Alzheimer's disease.

If you have a recipe you would like to submit, please e-mail it to Jessie McHeffey, AFA Teens Coordinator, at jmcheffey@alzfdn.org.

Watch Today's Biggest Music Stars Perform on the "Together for Care" Telethon



Watch live performances from an American idol winner, a Billboard Hot 100 artist and more.

Take Action!

- [Find us on Facebook](#)
- [Follow us on twitter](#)
- [Submit a creative contribution](#)
- [Comment on the AFA Teens blog](#)
- [Post on the AFA Teens message board](#)
- [Start an AFA Teens Chapter](#)

AFA Teens Chapters/ Teen Activists

- Gulfport High School, Gulfport, MS
- Hynes Family String Quintet, Norwell, MA
- Lebanon Valley College's Gamma Sigma Sigma Service Sorority, York, PA
- Manalapan Englishtown Schools Middle School, Manalapan, NJ
- Monte Vista High School, Danville, CA
- Robinson High School, Tampa, FL
- Silverado Senior Living- The Woodlands, TX
- Wake Early College of Health and Sciences, Raleigh, NC
- [Click here to find out about forming a chapter in your community.](#)

Alzheimer's Disease Facts & Figures

- **Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, degenerative disorder that attacks the brain's nerve cells, or neurons, resulting in loss of memory, thinking and language skills, and behavioral changes.**
- **Currently, as many as 5.1 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease.**
- **It is projected that the incidence of Americans with Alzheimer's disease could more than triple by mid-century.**
- **Clinicians can now diagnose Alzheimer's disease with up to 90 percent accuracy. But it can only be confirmed by an autopsy, during which pathologists look for the disease's characteristic plaques and tangles in brain tissue.**