

BAI Beacon

*The Newsletter from Family and Community Services
Made possible by generous donations to Banner Alzheimer's Foundation*

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Beacon Bits *(Continued)*

GPS Lecture: Alzheimer's Prevention Research – What You Need to Know

BAI is leading national and international efforts to prevent Alzheimer's disease. Join one of the leading physician/scientist to learn about these accelerated efforts and how to get involved.

Friday, September 12, 10:30 a.m. – noon

Musical Instrument Museum

4725 E. Mayo Blvd., Phoenix

Free but registration is required. To register, call (602) 230-CARE

Transitioning Care

Learn how to create successful transitions for receiving help in the home or moving a person into a residential care setting.

Tuesday, September 16, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Banner Alzheimer's Institute, Third Floor Conference Room

901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix

Free but registration is required. Call (602) 839-6850 to register.

As Dementia Progresses: Next Steps for Caregivers

Learn strategies to succeed in caring for the person with moderate to advanced stages of dementia.

Thursday, September 18, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Banner Alzheimer's Institute, Third Floor Conference Room

901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix

Free but registration is required. Call (602) 839-6850 to register.

Planning Ahead Class for Caregivers

Friday, September 19, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Banner Sun Health Research Institute

10515 W. Santa Fe Drive, Sun City

Free but registration is required. To register, call (602) 230-CARE

Brain Activities for People with Dementia

Learn how to successfully engage the person with dementia in meaningful and successful activities.

Tuesday, September 23, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Banner Alzheimer's Institute, Third Floor Conference Room

901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix

Free but registration is required. Call (602) 839-6850 to register

Musical Memories

This monthly program now begins weekly!

Every Friday, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

Pyle Adult Recreation Center

655 E. Southern Avenue, Tempe

Contact Robin.Rio@asu.edu for questions

Congratulations to Joan Keffeler, BAI volunteer and Health Care Hero Finalist recognized by the Phoenix Business Journal. Joan's outstanding work in the "With Art in Mind" program and her valuable assistance in other Family and Community Services programs earned her this distinguished award.

Beacon Bits

COMPASS: Directions for Caregivers after the Dementia Diagnosis

Learn the basics of dementia and strategies to ensure successful caregiving efforts

Thursday, September 4, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. OR

Monday, September 22, 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Banner Alzheimer's Institute

901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix

Free but registration is required. To register, call (602) 839-6850

Planning Ahead Class for Caregivers

Learn how to plan for the medical, social, legal and financial needs in dementia.

Monday, September 8, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Banner Alzheimer's Institute

901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix

Free but registration is required. To register, call (602) 839-6850

Brain G.Y.M. Boot Camp

This 4-hour class will teach participants lifestyle strategies and how to choose mental exercises to minimize the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Wednesday, September 10, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

SCAN Health Plan Arizona

1400 E. Southern Avenue, Tempe

\$25.00 per person, includes instruction and workbooks for class and home use.

To register, call (602) 230-CARE

When the Person with Dementia Goes Missing

You're having a delightfully normal day. The morning routine went as planned. The morning appointment went off without a hitch, and after cleaning up from lunch, you decided to step outside for a short break since your loved one is settled in watching their favorite TV show. After a quick 10 minutes of respite, you come back into the house to see the couch empty, the front door open and your person is nowhere to be found.

Wandering is an all too common occurrence in people with Alzheimer's disease, with up to 60% wandering at some point. With the dire safety concerns this poses, worry is understandable.

The first line of defense is the same for every behavior that appears with Alzheimer's disease/related dementia... PREVENTION. There are a variety of ways a household can be adapted to try to prevent your loved one from leaving; and these solutions don't have to cost a fortune. Sometimes something as simple as a 'STOP' or 'Do Not Enter' sign taped to the door will do the trick. Other times by placing a dark rug in front of the door, the person with dementia perceives a hole in the floor and will not attempt to cross it. Even investing in a door alarm can help to alert you if your person opens the door when you are in another room.

Another line of defense is to enroll in the Alzheimer's Association Medic Alert/ Safe Return (MA/SR) program. The MA/SR bracelet will activate, "a community support network, including local Alzheimer Association chapters and law enforcement agencies, to help reunite the person who wandered with the caregiver or a family member." (www.alz.org)

However, even when we use all of our clever prevention tricks, sometimes our person can get away from us, or become disoriented and lost in a location that, until this point, has been familiar. When someone with dementia wanders, especially in Arizona, time is of the essence. Police recommend not waiting more than 15 minutes from when you notice your loved one missing to alert authorities. They note for every additional minute that goes by, the search area broadens. If someone wanders in a car, another minute adds another mile to the search radius.

Sometimes caregivers are leery of contacting first responders which can stem from a variety of reasons. However, the most common reason is that caregivers feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility for their loved one; so when something unexpected happens, like wandering away, caregivers feel responsible, guilty, or even embarrassed. Frankly, these are emotions that can be worked through at another time. What is important is that you get professionals involved in the search immediately. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- When and where were they last seen?
- Have they wandered previously?
- If missing before, where did they go and where were they found?
- Did they leave on foot, or in a vehicle?
- Do they know how to use public transportation?
- Are they carrying a cell phone? Identification? Money? Credit cards?
- Would they recognize police or someone in uniform?
- Would they have a negative reaction to being approached by someone in uniform?
- Do they have, or have access to, weapons?
- Do they remember their name? Address?

Other physically identifying information can be helpful as well. Keeping a recent photograph can be a great start, but also letting authorities know what your person is wearing, if they use a cane or walker, or have any tattoos.

Once search and rescue has been called into action, letting them know about any ‘tips from your toolbox’ can be helpful. For example, if you loved one responds really well (or not so well) to males, or females. Perhaps there is a grandchild that your loved one consistently gets excited about. Perhaps they are very sensitive to tone of voice. By sharing this information, first responders will be able to merge their expertise and your loved one’s needs to be more effective in their search.

Recently, a Silver Alert system was implemented in Arizona, which was patterned after Amber Alerts for missing children. Silver Alerts can be issued when a vulnerable older adult is missing and certain other criteria are met. They enable law enforcement to alert local media outlets to the search which helps to get many other eyes looking for your loved one.

Of course, preventing wandering is the ideal, but if it does happen, being timely, forthcoming and thorough with first responders can make all the difference.

If your person is a resident of Mesa, there are currently scholarship funds available for enrollment in the Medic Alert/ Safe Return program. Contact Karen Stegenga at Karen.stegenga@mesaaz.gov for more information.

**Did you know there are numerous ways to support Banner Alzheimer’s Institute?
To learn more, call 602-747-GIVE (4483).**

Have a Question?

To submit your question for future consideration
email us at:
bainfo@bannerhealth.com

Our Mission

To end Alzheimer’s disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families, and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.



Ask The Expert

Heather Mulder
Outreach Program Manager

Dear Heather:

I attend a wonderful caregiver support group. This last month we were discussing wandering and the group was adamant that I should get an identification bracelet for my mother who has moderate Alzheimer’s disease. I don’t understand why this is important as my mother has never shown any interest in leaving the house. When I am not with her, she is with another family member or attends an adult day health care program. Do you really think this is necessary?

Signed,

Carol

Dear Carol:

The old adage of an “ounce of prevention” sure fits when it comes to ensuring the safety and well-being of those affected by dementia. We know that 60% of people with dementia will wander or get separated from primary caregivers at some point in the illness. It only takes once for your mom to open the front door and take steps out into the neighborhood that can become the great abyss. We often hear of caregivers becoming separated in public places such as malls, airports, etc. when needing to use the rest room. And, even good day care and residential facilities see people with dementia exit with other guests on occasion.

Certainly a very cost effective way to add another layer of protection is to enroll your mom in the Alzheimer’s Association Safe Return/Medic Alert Program. However, we also encourage you to enroll as well. Imagine that you were involved in a life threatening/emergency situation and couldn’t speak. The first responders will see your bracelet and identify you as a caregiver for someone with dementia. This allows your mom to be attended to during your emergency situation.

Once you get the Medic Alert bracelet, we recommend you place the bracelet on your mom’s dominant hand and secure the clasp as she will be unlikely to remove it. If she asks you about it, simply respond, “I am wearing one just like it in case of an emergency.”

Some families elect to give their loved one a cell phone thinking that the GPS navigation system will allow them to track their person in case of elopement or separation. It is essential to make sure the phone is fully charged at all times and your person is able to call/answer the phone. While this might work early in the illness, by the moderate stage of dementia, I no longer recommend this as a safe strategy.

In summary, I’d recommend that you take the advice of your support group. Hopefully you will never need to activate the system, but if you do, you will be glad to know you have taken all of the necessary steps to keep your mom safe.