

## **2010 Great Ideas Contest**

### ***Category 2: Older Adult Family Support/Caregiver Support Program***

**Sponsoring Agency:** The Faith In Action Alzheimer's Care Team Program is a service offered through Eddy Alzheimer's Services, a non-profit agency operating under the umbrella of parent company, Northeast Health.

#### **Initial Problem to be Addressed:**

Statistics have indicated that approximately 75% of individuals with dementia are cared for in their home, where most people would prefer to remain. Caring for an individual with dementia can be isolating and exhausting—which can often lead to the caregiver succumbing to illness and fatigue unless support is received. This is where our volunteer care teams, who are trained in dementia care, can help to provide non-medical respite and support at no cost to the caregiver or the person they are caring for thus alleviating some financial concerns related to care in the home.

#### **Brief Description of Program:**

The Alzheimer's Care Team Program (ACT) was first created in 2002, and was partially funded through a grant offered by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The design of the Care Team Program was modeled after the Eddy Visiting Nurses Association's AIDS Care Team Program, which proved to be an exceptional way of filling the gaps in care for those experiencing a long-term illness.

As part of our Alzheimer's Care Team Program, teams of volunteers (4-12 members per team) from a four county region provide a multitude of non-medical support services for caregivers and patients with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. They can assist with transportation, aid in meal preparation, offer medication reminders and run errands. Perhaps the most important service they offer is that of respite.

The Alzheimer's Care Team (ACT) Manager recruits teams of volunteers from various faith-based groups by working in coordination with the priest, rabbi or minister of the congregation. Volunteers are then trained by the ACT Manager who provides extensive fundamentals training that is updated with current trends and proven techniques. The ACT manager also meets with the team every 4-6 weeks for discussion of the team's successes with their current care partner, techniques that worked, any changes that are observed with the carepartner or caregiver, review hours volunteered in that time frame, develop an upcoming schedule to work with the caregiver as well as discuss any possible new carepartners for the team.

The ACT Manager receives referrals from the community and caregivers themselves and completes a home visit on each carepartner. The ACT Manager will then match these care partners with teams in their community. During this home visit, the program manager gathers background history, significant medical information, discusses how best

the team can help and refers caregivers to other community resources that may benefit them in their role as caregiver. The ACT Manager maintains ongoing communication with the caregiver and the care teams.

**How does this Program Help/Why do you like the Program:**

This model has been successful in meeting the needs of people in the community in a cost efficient manner and fostering education about dementia. The innovative “team approach” to volunteering is at the heart of this program’s success. Aside from minimizing the number of hours each person must offer, it creates a social network for volunteers and ensures that caregivers will have full coverage despite volunteer vacations, illness or other reasons that might prevent one individual from being available. A team spirit evolves that promotes volunteer retention. For caregivers, it offers a valuable service at no cost to them, alleviating some financial stressors in addition to providing some emotional peace of mind and a new circle of friends that they can depend upon.

The simple concept behind this model makes it ideal for replication and some groups have already begun to do this. The Eddy’s Care Team Program has served as consultants to programs in Ulster County as well as Community Caregivers when they first implemented their Dementia Respite Care Team.

**Total Program Cost and Major Income Sources**

We are currently funded primarily through a grant from our parent agency, Northeast Health, and through a Community Service Provider grant offered through the Office of Long Term Health New York State Department of Health. The total budget for 2010 is \$26,426. Through contributions from families that have been served by a care team, a ministry grant from one of the churches that supports a team and some fundraising events, we have a “Volunteer Needs Fund” that is used by volunteers to take their care partners out for lunch, buy a gift for the caregiver or care partner, or reimburse the volunteer for an unusual expense resulting from their role as volunteer.

**Special Issues/Characteristics:**

This program offers the dual benefit of having “boots on the ground” to serve caregivers while also offering the professional support of Eddy Alzheimer’s Services. As the disease progresses and new issues arise, the program manager is available for support and resource referral for the next step in care. The extended nature of the services offered allows for the development of trust and close relationships with our families.

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