



LIVE WELL  
SAN DIEGO



# **ALZHEIMER'S**Project

San Diego unites for a cure and care

**ANNUAL REPORT - 2021**

[WWW.SDALZHEIMERSPROJECT.ORG](http://WWW.SDALZHEIMERSPROJECT.ORG)





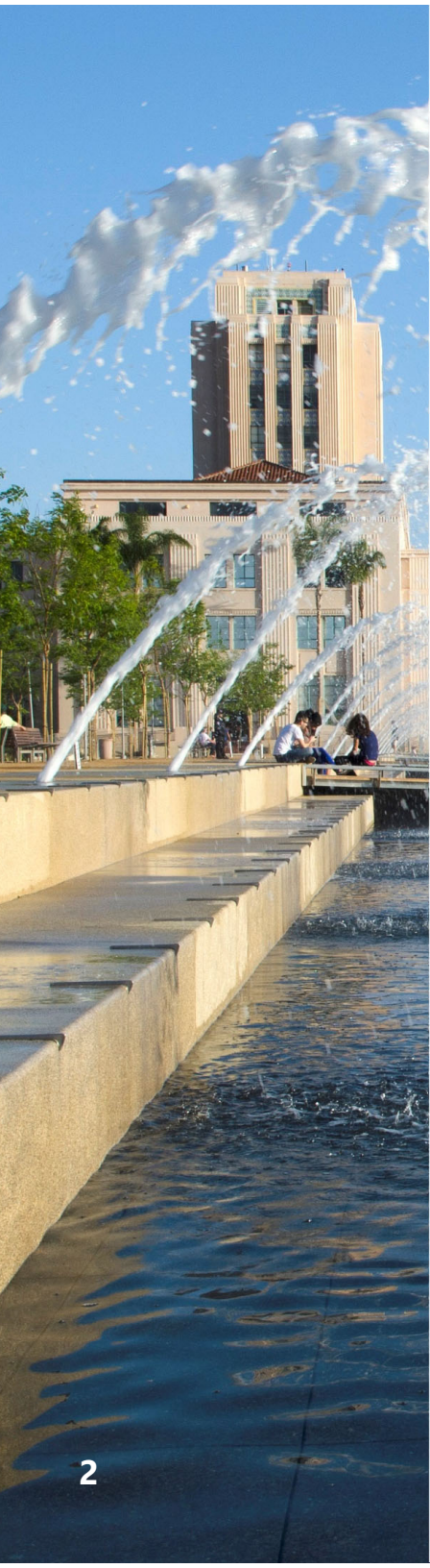


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# Executive Introduction

In 2014, the County of San Diego (County) took a groundbreaking step. It brought together, for the first time, the region's top political leadership, scientists, healthcare systems, public universities, caregiver organizations, and others to address the growing toll of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias on families and the community.

The Alzheimer's Project was launched to accelerate the search for a cure and to bolster services for families in need of help and hope. When the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) established it, the initiative was considered trailblazing. Few, if any, regions in the nation have since matched it in scale or scope.

Today, thanks to The Alzheimer's Project, front-line doctors have access to more diagnostic tools, San Diego's world-class scientists are mining new avenues of research, and more programs and services are in place to improve the care and safety of those living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

But huge challenges remain. The number of local residents with Alzheimer's disease continues to surge, and it is the region's third-leading cause of death, compared to the sixth-leading cause nationally.

About 100,000 San Diegans 55 and older have some form of dementia, an estimate that is expected to rise nearly 17 percent by 2030. The number of family members and other unpaid caregivers needed in 2020 to help those with the disease exceeded 250,000, while the value of their unpaid care was an estimated \$3.6 billion. In addition to Alzheimer's disease, related dementias include Lewy Body Dementia, Vascular Dementia, and Frontotemporal Disorders. These progressive brain disorders are characterized by the condition of dementia, which can include a loss of memory, problem-solving and perceptual skills, and other thinking abilities that become so severe they interfere with daily life.

**Source:** County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Services, Community Health Statistics, Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Database.

# Executive Introduction (cont.)

Many of San Diego's best and brightest scientists are participating in Collaboration4Cure (C4C), the research arm of The Alzheimer's Project, to explore possible treatments and cures for dementia. Promising drug-discovery projects supported by C4C have so far been awarded a total of \$8.73 million in federal grants.

COVID-19 has given the challenges posed by Alzheimer's added urgency. Citing the toll that COVID-19 can take on long-term brain function, neurologists say it may increase the risk of dementia. A global study into a possible link is underway. Meanwhile, since the start of stay-at-home orders in early 2020, Aging & Independence Services (AIS) has retooled and adapted programs and services so it can continue to reach vulnerable seniors during the pandemic. AIS has led the County's efforts to educate older San Diegans and those with disabilities about COVID-19.

This latest annual report details the work of The Alzheimer's Project as it forges ahead amid the COVID-19 crisis and other challenges. The Alzheimer's Project is now part of the County's Aging Roadmap, a framework to ensure the region has programs and communities that support older residents. It is also linked to the Healthy Brain Initiative, a state-funded grant program awarded to the County in July 2020, which is making possible many of the current efforts and accomplishments in this report, such as increasing caregiver support tools for physicians to use in clinical settings.

The Alzheimer's Project has made significant progress on many fronts. But seniors are the fastest-growing segment of the county population, and as their numbers balloon, so will cases of dementia.

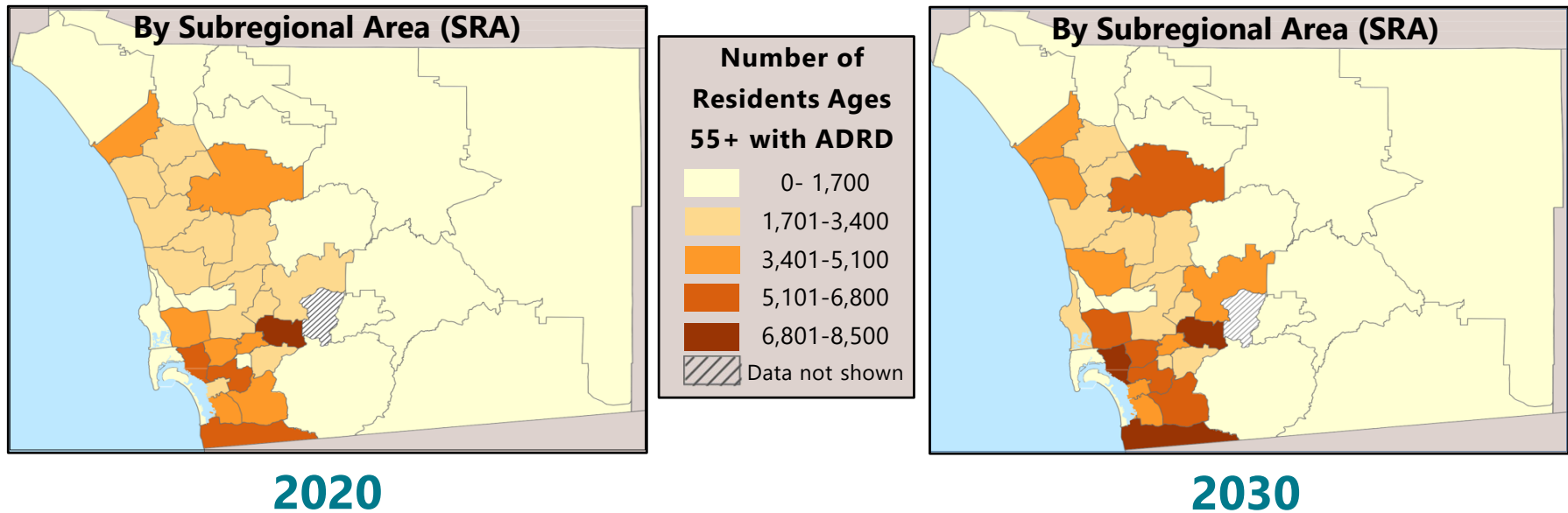
Our work has just begun.



Director, Aging and Adult Services  
County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency



# Estimated Number of Residents, Ages 55+, with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD)



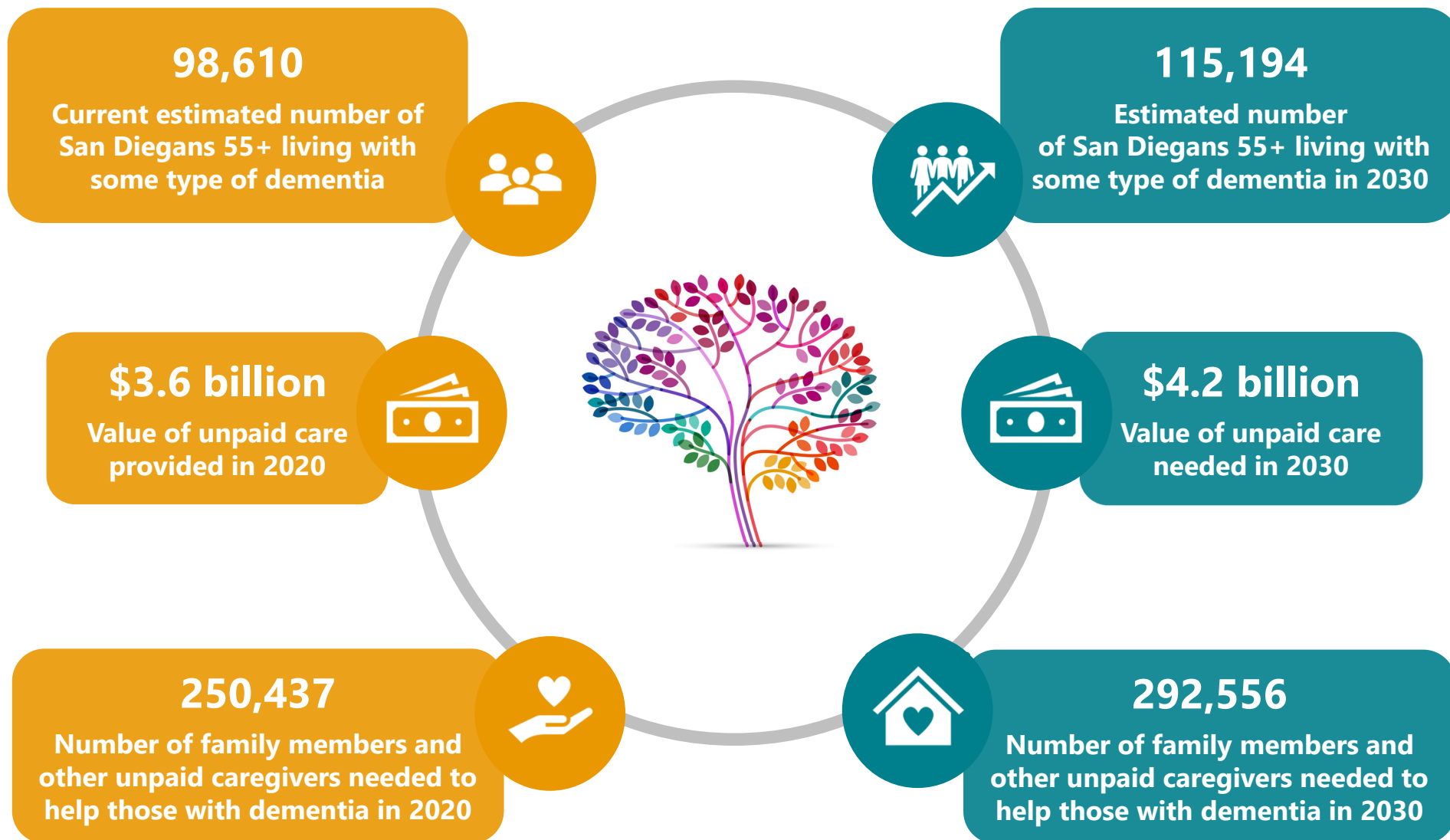
**Communities in six geographical areas – Central, East, North Central, North Coastal, North Inland, and South – with the highest prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and types of dementia within their region in 2020:**

- Central San Diego
- Oceanside
- Harbison Crest – El Cajon
- Escondido
- Kearny Mesa
- South Bay

**Map prepared by:** County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Services, Community Health Statistics Unit, 1/2021.

**Data Source:** Patient Discharge Database and Emergency Department Discharge Database, (CA OSHPD), County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Community Health Statistics Unit; SANDAG, Current Population Projection Estimates, Released 03/2017.

# Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias – By the Numbers



Source: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Services, Community Health Statistics, Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Database.

# About The Alzheimer's Project



## What is The Alzheimer's Project?

The Alzheimer's Project is a County-led initiative launched in 2014 to address the escalating toll of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia in the region. Alzheimer's is the third-leading cause of death locally, compared to the sixth-leading cause in the nation.

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## How did it begin?

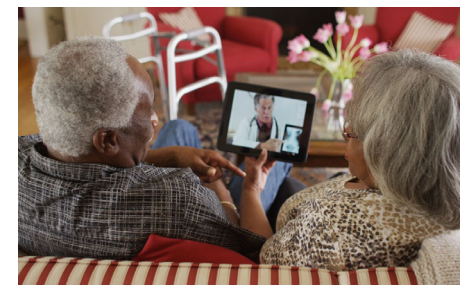
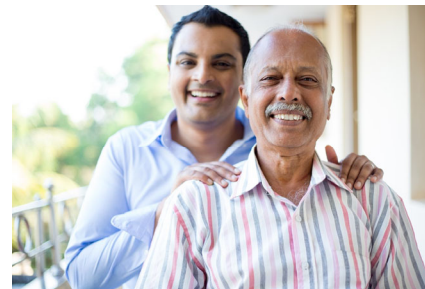
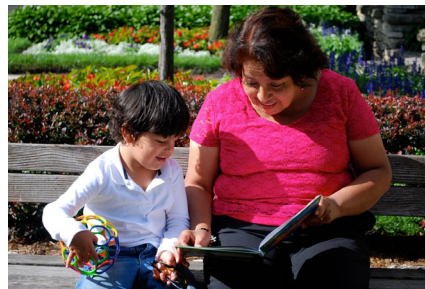
The Alzheimer's Project was initiated at the 2014 State of the County address, which highlighted the on-going surge in local dementia cases. When brought forward for approval, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to support the effort.

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## Who is involved?

Among those who have led the project are Dr. Michael Lobatz with Scripps Health, philanthropist Darlene Shiley, San Diego County Sheriff William D. Gore, UC San Diego neurologist Dr. William Mobley, and former Supervisor Dianne Jacob. Participating organizations and institutions include Alzheimer's San Diego, San Diego County Medical Society, UC San Diego, Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute, Scripps Health, Sharp Healthcare, and Kaiser Permanente. The County's Health and Human Services Agency, which includes Aging & Independence Services, has taken the lead in overseeing most elements of the project.





# About The Alzheimer's Project

## How is it structured?



The improvements have grown out of the work and recommendations of four roundtables – Care, Clinical, Public Awareness & Education, and Collaboration4Cure. The Care Roundtable focuses on boosting programs and services for those with dementia and their caregivers. The Clinical Roundtable works to improve patient care in doctors' offices, hospital emergency departments, and other settings. Public Awareness leads efforts to educate San Diegans and provides detailed information about the disease. Collaboration4Cure – an alliance of leading research institutions, Alzheimer's San Diego, and the County – is exploring potential cures and treatments.

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## What are some of its accomplishments?



- Strengthening first responders' tools for assisting residents with dementia.
  - Creating the region's first primary-care standards for the screening, diagnosis, and maintenance of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.
  - Launching multiple drug-discovery research projects in search of a cure.
  - Bolstering services for dementia patients and families in crisis situations.
- 

## How is it supported?



The lead division supporting the work of The Alzheimer's Project is AIS, part of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency. AIS offers a variety of programs that serve residents with dementia and their caregivers. These programs include care coordination services to help older adults stay in their homes, Adult Protective Services, In-Home Supportive Services, caregiver support, community education, and the Age Well San Diego Dementia Friendly Team. Among the entities frequently mentioned in this report:

- AIS – Aging & Independence Services
- APS – Adult Protective Services
- County – County of San Diego
- HHS – Health and Human Services Agency



## Care Roundtable

The Care Roundtable of The Alzheimer's Project works to strengthen the network of services available to people living with dementia, along with their caregivers. Serving on the Care Roundtable are representatives of non-profit groups, public safety agencies, healthcare systems, care facilities, and family caregivers. Their recommendations have led to the development and expansion of many innovative programs.

## Accomplishments

- 1 Expansion of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department's Take Me Home program and the region's missing persons alert system, to help address incidents of wandering and to reunite families with those who have wandered off.
- 2 Creation of the County of San Diego's (County) Respite Care Voucher Program to assist family caregivers who need an occasional break.  
  
A program called FIRST was developed to help those with memory issues who live alone, as well as those with moderate-severe dementia and their caregivers. Social workers with FIRST assess needs and educate clients and families about living with dementia, as well as help them access services and plan for the future.
- 3 Creation of an eight-person unit in the District Attorney's Office to investigate and prosecute crimes committed against those with dementia and others in long-term care facilities.
- 4 Establishment of Choose Well, an online directory and rating system to help families find quality residential care for their elderly loved ones.  
  
Launching the Alzheimer's Response Team (ART) to ensure those with dementia, and their caregivers, get the right kind of help in a crisis. Through this program, an ART team – consisting of a County Adult Protective Services (APS) worker and a dementia specialist from Alzheimer's San Diego – is called in by first responders to provide resources and support for those with dementia and their families.
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## Finding Respite During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Caring for those with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia can be a big challenge in normal times. For many families, COVID-19 has made it even tougher.

In 2019, the County teamed up with community partners to launch the Respite Care Voucher Program to ease the emotional, financial, and physical burden on caregivers, who are often family members. What makes the program unique is its cost-sharing mechanism – caregivers and the County split the cost of the respite care 50-50 so that families have access to a qualified fill-in caregiver. This gives the regular caregiver a chance to run errands, carry out other duties, or just recharge. It is available to those who do not qualify for programs like In-Home Supportive Services but may not be able to afford private respite programs. A variety of types of respite are available, including in-home care, companion care, adult daycare, overnight respite, and out-of-home care. The County contracts with Coast Care Partners and Southern Caregiver Resource Center to operate this program.

Upon the program's launch, families were eager to take advantage of the much-needed support. But during the start of the pandemic, with the first round of stay-at-home orders, life in many caregiver households was upended. Families scrambled to deal

with sudden job changes and other major shifts, such as the closure of schools. The daily challenge of assisting someone living with dementia was further compounded amid concerns about the vulnerability of older San Diegans to COVID-19.

Community partners assisting with the County voucher program reported a sharp drop in participation last March as many families held off on taking part. Many caregivers were afraid of having someone enter their homes. In addition, access to some community support systems were no longer available as adult day programs closed due to concerns that these settings could lead to transmission of the virus. Despite caregivers' reluctance to use services, their need for additional support remained.

Fortunately, participation in the voucher program rebounded by May as families and the broader region became more educated about the protective benefits of masks, handwashing, and other precautions that were put in place by respite providers. The program served 1,411 residents in 2020 and provided 70,940 hours of service.





## Respite Care Voucher Program Caregiver Spotlight

Theirs was a love that lasted for over 65 years. Alyce, 83, cared for her beloved husband Paul DeGrasse until his death in the spring of 2020 at age 84. The two were high school sweethearts and built a happy life and family together. After Paul suffered a severe heart attack in 2012, he beat the odds and survived, but over time Alyce started to notice some cognitive problems. She found herself assuming more and more of the daily tasks and eventually became a full-time caregiver.

“For a long while, I was waking up every morning at 3 a.m.,” Alyce shared. “He started having sores and I had to get up every two hours to change him. I wasn’t sleeping. I’d lie awake.”

Alyce was grateful to learn about the County’s Respite Care Voucher Program in 2019. The extra support was a blessing for Alyce, who had been determined to care for Paul at home for as long as possible. “He took care of me for 64 years,” she explained.

But while it was fulfilling to give back to the loving man who cared for her, Alyce found that caregiving took a toll. “I was surviving. I had been fine, but then I broke down a couple of times,” she admitted. “There was not much time for myself.” Once she was able to make use of the voucher program, however, Alyce got a little more time to herself. “I took four hours where I could. It came in handy.” While friends and family would encourage her to go out and have fun, Alyce found that having time to take care of errands and just go to the grocery store was what she needed the most.

Alyce’s message for other caregivers is to “get as much help as you can and try to get out as much as possible.” She is grateful that she connected with the voucher program and was able to receive extra support that allowed her to continue caring for Paul. “It means everything to me that I could care for him at home,” Alyce said. “He’d been everything to me. I wouldn’t have wanted it any other way.”





## The Alzheimer's Response Team: Responding to the Needs of Families

It was the hospital social worker who picked up the phone and put in a referral to ART. Her patient, an 82-year-old woman with dementia, had fallen yet again at home. The woman's husband was struggling to care for her, due to increasing agitation, wandering, and difficulty administering medication. He wanted to continue caring for her at home, but felt overwhelmed and worried about her safety.

A County APS social worker assessed the situation by phone and determined that the ART team could help. Upon the woman's return home, the team assigned a County APS nurse to visit the home. She educated the husband on medication use. Alzheimer's San Diego provided respite care to the husband to give him a break. APS and Alzheimer's San Diego provided regular coaching to the husband on how to manage his wife's aggression and challenging behaviors, installed home safety devices to prevent falls, and registered her in the Take Me Home program to help address the wandering.

After a few weeks, there was a significant decrease in the woman's aggression and challenging behaviors as she was receiving her medication daily, and her husband had been trained to use de-escalation techniques.

He no longer needed to rely on calling 911 for help. With a safer home environment, she was no longer falling every other day. The husband felt empowered to continue to care for his wife and was connected to community resources to help provide respite care once his time in the ART program came to a close.

Due to changes in their cognition and ability to take care of themselves, those living with Alzheimer's disease may find themselves in difficult situations that put them at risk for repeated hospital stays or even law enforcement involvement. As a loved one's condition progresses, many families find themselves at the breaking point as they struggle to provide care at home, as illustrated in the composite case described above.

Following approval from the San Diego County Board of Supervisors in December 2017, the ART project was launched to provide an alternative pathway, with a specialized level of care, for people with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias experiencing crisis situations.

Developed through a partnership between the County Aging & Independence Services (AIS), Sharp Healthcare, Grossmont Healthcare District, San Diego



## The Alzheimer's Response Team: Responding to the Needs of Families (cont.)

County Sheriff's Department, and Alzheimer's San Diego, ART first began accepting referrals in June 2018, covering the area served by the Santee Sheriff's Station. ART has since expanded its coverage to include areas served by the Escondido Police Department, the La Mesa Police Department, and the County Sheriff's Stations in Imperial Beach and Rancho San Diego.



Referrals to ART are made by hospital staff, community organizations, or first responders for crisis situations involving residents with dementia, such as wandering, repeated falls, aggression due to disorientation, health and safety hazards, and caregiver neglect. When a referral is made, an APS social worker assesses the situation over the phone and if appropriate, deploys the ART-Crisis team, comprised of APS staff. The team make in-person contact within 48 hours for most cases and within 1 hour for emergency situations. This initial visit helps to address the person and their caregiver's immediate needs. Some cases reveal serious protective issues and are subsequently treated as a traditional APS case. For some families, this initial visit is sufficient to stabilize the situation with education and referrals to community services such as respite care. Families that need ongoing support are referred to the ART-Support team, which consists of an APS social worker and a



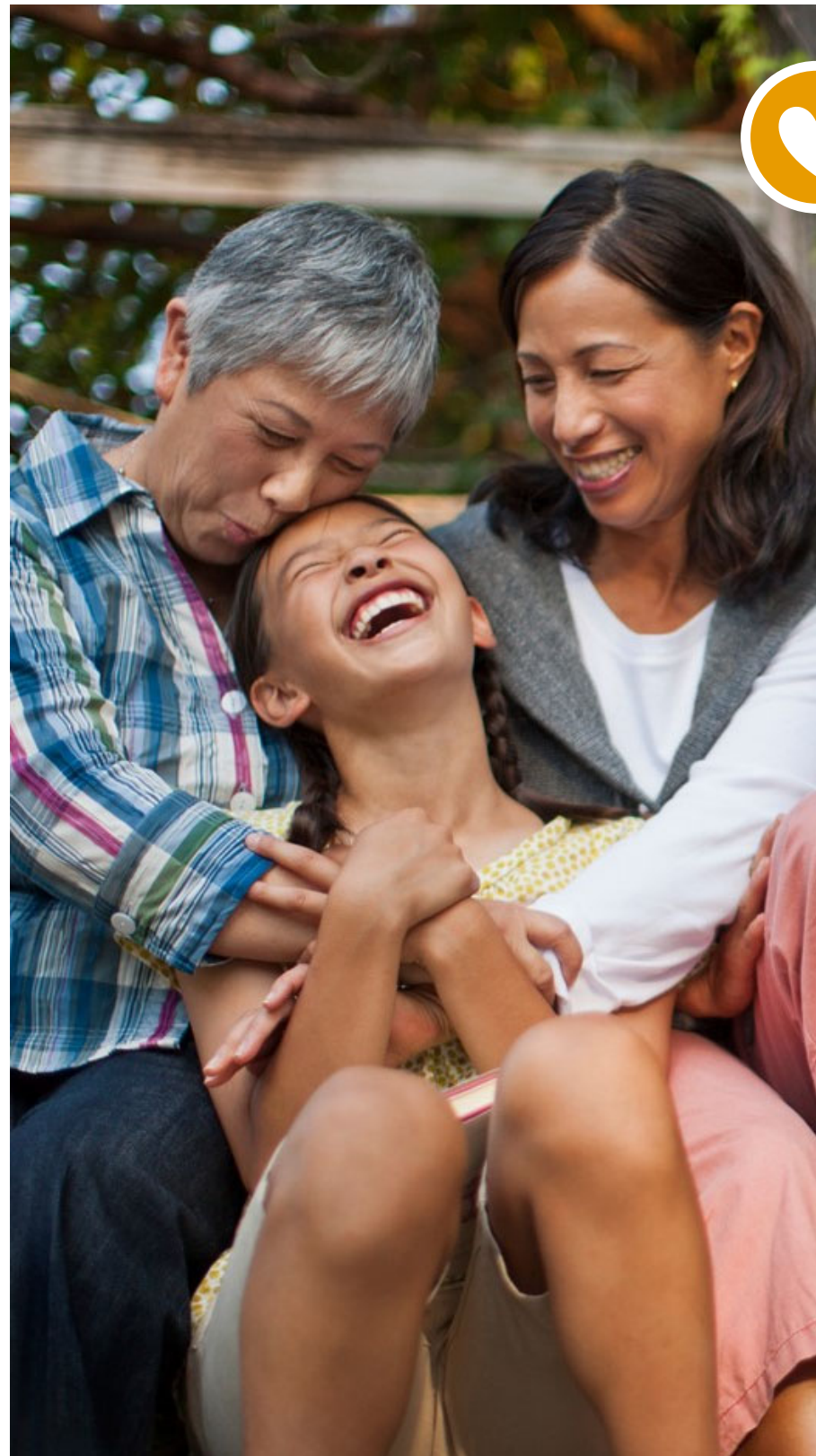
## The Alzheimer's Response Team: Responding to the Needs of Families (cont.)

dementia specialist from Alzheimer's San Diego. The ART support team provides up to six months of case management with resource referrals and assistance such as home safety equipment, caregiver skills training, education on handling difficult behaviors, medication management, transportation, respite care, housing placement, and more.

Between its launch in June 2018 until the end of 2020, ART received 238 calls for assistance. One hundred seventy-seven (177) of those resulted in a visit by the ART-Crisis team. Eighty-one (81) of the cases were referred to ART's ongoing support team for longer term care coordination and finding solutions for more complex needs.

Initially, COVID-19 impacted the program by limiting the ART team's ability to provide ongoing support for clients and families, but those visits have since resumed.

While only two and half years old, the program is showing great promise. Feedback from the families served indicates that the ART program has successfully helped them access services and supports to improve their safety and quality of life, and also prevent future crises.





## **FIRST Linked Those with Dementia to Critical Services**

When a social worker from the County's FIRST program met with an older, female client in the San Diego County backcountry in 2020, it was clear the woman needed help. She lived alone, without a phone or transportation, and had run out of her inhaler medication. She had not seen a doctor in years and was showing early signs of dementia.

Paramedics were called and she spent a week in the hospital, where she was given new inhalers and approval to keep an oxygen tank in her home.

When SDG&E later initiated power shutoffs in her community due to high winds, FIRST was there again to help. The social worker contacted APS to report the client's lack of access to food and running well water. APS stepped in to ensure she had necessary supplies for the power shutoff and start to put other supportive services in place. She was later referred to PACE, a health plan for independent seniors who need coordinated medical care.

Today, the woman is happy and safe in her home. She has access to transportation and in-home care. She has a cell phone for medical alerts.

And it all started with FIRST, or First Identify and Refer, then Serve and Track, a project that was funded by a grant from the federal Administration for Community





## FIRST Linked Those with Dementia to Critical Services (cont.)

Living. The grant's goal was to increase "dementia capability" in organizations serving older adults. Dementia capable organizations have staff that are trained to understand the needs of clients living with dementia and be attuned to resources and best practices to support them.

AIS administered and operated the program from 2018 to early 2021. FIRST provided care coordination for individuals with dementia who were living alone, as well as for those with moderate-to-severe dementia and their caregivers. FIRST social workers assessed the needs of clients and connected them with critical resources, such as financial services, meal-delivery programs, respite care, and life planning.

FIRST also offered behavioral symptom management training to caregivers, created a cognitive screening protocol, and provided training to AIS staff and local professionals to improve dementia capability. The program has served more than 340 people, including approximately 145 caregivers of those with dementia, 125 individuals with moderate-severe dementia, and 70 clients with dementia who live alone.

Now that the grant project has concluded, AIS is incorporating lessons learned into ongoing agency services. AIS' case management programs are applying best practices, such as behavioral symptom management

training and life planning, to assist caregivers and those who may have cognitive impairment. Cognitive screening activities are also continuing in programs such as APS so that appropriate supports can be put in place to help address or prevent abuse and neglect. By increasing dementia capability, AIS is better equipped to support older adults with dementia to remain safely in their homes and maintain as much independence as possible.

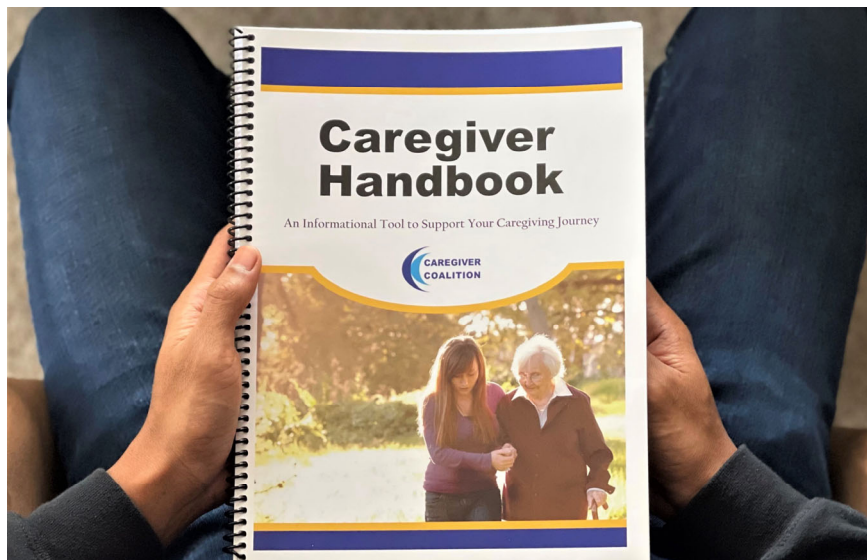




## Updates to Caregiver Handbook

In 2019, the Caregiver Coalition of San Diego developed a comprehensive resource guide to address the needs of caregivers, their families, and the community. The *Caregiver Handbook: An Informational Tool to Support Your Caregiving Journey* not only highlights topics such as common needs, communication, financial and legal issues, and caring for someone living with mental health challenges, it also includes a section on Alzheimer's disease.

To better support caregivers whose care recipients are living with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia, the Caregiver Handbook is being updated to include additional resources and is expected to be completed in early 2021. The new sections highlight local programs such as Take Me Home, which was launched in 2010 by the San Diego County Sheriff's Department. This program includes a registry for those who have a cognitive disability and difficulty communicating. Participating law enforcement have access to critical information about a registered person in case of an emergency. People with dementia can get disoriented, and this program can help someone who gets lost and needs assistance to be reunited with family and it provides peace of mind for caregivers who are worried their care recipient may wander.



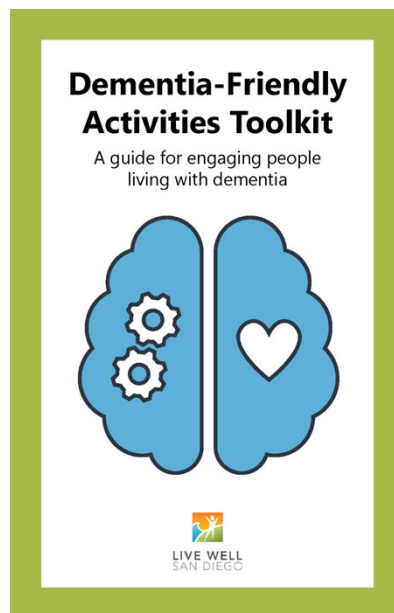


# Updates to Caregiver Handbook (cont.)

Supplementary tools have also been added, such as the Dementia Communication Tip Card, which was designed to help caregivers educate and inform someone out in public on how to best communicate with their companion who is living with dementia. Another helpful resource is the Dementia-Friendly Activities Toolkit, which includes ideas for how caregivers can engage those they care for in enjoyable activities, such as gardening, cooking, and music.

To address common challenges, such as sleep disturbances, combativeness, and paranoia, the IDEA (Identify, Educate, Adapt) strategy was also introduced into the Caregiver Handbook. This strategy helps caregivers and family members identify triggers of specific behaviors, and helps them understand the potential meaning behind the issue at hand. Usually, the solution involves the caregiver changing some aspect of the environment or the way they approach an activity. When caregivers can better manage difficult behaviors, daily life is improved for both the caregiver and the person living with dementia.


To download the latest version of the Caregiver Handbook, visit: [www.CaregiverCoalitionSD.org](http://www.CaregiverCoalitionSD.org).



**Activity Idea:** Preparing a Fruit Salad

**Materials:**

1. Variety of fruit
2. Fruit/vegetable peeler
3. Sink to wash fruit
4. Spoon and bowls



**Steps:**

1. Have the individual living with dementia select the fruits of their choice to be included in the fruit salad.
2. Encourage the participant to smell and touch the fruit and to talk about its smell and flavor.
3. Have them assist with washing the fruit or other preparation tasks.
4. Engage in conversation by talking about where the fruit comes from in the world.
5. Encourage them to spoon the fruit salad into bowls for themselves and/or others.

**Modifications:**

- If it is safe to do so, allow your loved one to assist with more difficult tasks such as peeling or chopping the fruit.

**Tips:**


- Link the activity to a theme, holiday, or an event such as Easter, Christmas, or Halloween.
- Find out about a person's connection to food and mealtimes from their life experience.
- Make this activity intergenerational by including a child or teen in the food preparation.

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**Activity Ideas:** Sorting and Matching

**Materials:**

1. Any material that is readily available that can be sorted, such as buttons, cards, spoons, socks, and other items.



**Steps:**

**Socks Example –**

1. Provide several colors of socks
2. Ask them to sort the socks by color. This step can vary depending on the materials you provide. For example, you can sort items by size or shape.
3. Help them if needed.
4. Continue repeating the task for as long as they enjoy.
5. Try changing the tasks or materials if they want a new activity.

**Tips:**

- Make sure that all items provided cannot be easily swallowed.
- Let them do what comes naturally. The point is to spark an interest.
- It doesn't matter if things are done "correctly."

**Other Independent Activity Ideas:** Easy bingo, puzzles, photo albums, audio, books, old family videos

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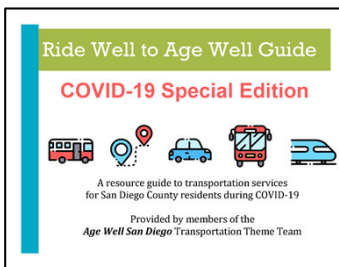
## Resources to Address Isolation during the Pandemic

With the onset of COVID-19 in March of 2020, AIS was tapped by the County's Emergency Operations Center to lead community outreach efforts focused on the Older Adult and Disability sector. The Older Adult and Disability Sector Support team provides weekly COVID-19 email updates, as well as monthly live telebriefings for disability and senior service providers, hosted by AIS leadership and a physician from the County's Public Health Services. In addition, AIS collaborated with community partners to create new resources to help older adults mitigate the impact of isolation during the stay-at-home orders. Many of these resources are especially helpful for people living with dementia and their caregivers. The resources are available on [www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov](http://www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov).



**Ways to Engage** is a resource flyer with ideas for recreation, lifelong learning, socializing, and volunteering from home.

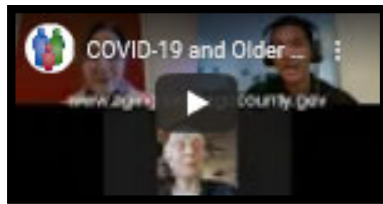
The **Get Connected Guide** is a 15-page booklet available in English and Spanish with information on: social isolation, loneliness, and how social connection impacts health; recommended steps to become more connected and overcome challenges to reaching out; tips for caregivers such as how to help loved ones get connected; and ways to engage in the community virtually through education, volunteer, health, fitness, and other opportunities.



**Ride Well to Age Well – COVID-19 Special Edition** includes information on public transportation and paratransit, a technical guide to smartphone apps, and more.



## Resources to Address Isolation during the Pandemic (cont.)



**Educational Videos** on a variety of topics, including on mental health and coping, COVID-19 scams, and more.

These resources are available to the community online, and hard copy booklets are being distributed as well. AIS social workers have been trained on the resources so they can share them with the thousands of struggling families they see each year, many of whom are grappling with Alzheimer's and other types of dementia. In addition, staff continue to share the resources with the local aging services network to increase the reach.



### LOOKING AHEAD

#### Expanding Caregiver Support

- Through the Healthy Brain Initiative, the recently expanded Caregiver Handbook (with more resources for dementia) will be translated into four languages, including Arabic, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. All the versions will be posted on The Alzheimer's Project and Caregiver Coalition websites and hard copies will be made available to social workers, clinicians, community organizations, and the public. The goal is to increase awareness of the resources in the Caregiver Handbook and increase access to them.
- Care Roundtable and Clinical Roundtable members will work together to increase awareness among healthcare providers of the wide variety of local caregiver resources. They will encourage healthcare providers to connect with their patients' caregivers to give them information about available resources and services to meet their needs.



## Clinical Roundtable

The Clinical Roundtable of The Alzheimer's Project provides guidance and expertise regarding medical care for those living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. It works closely with primary care providers, who often do the initial screening, evaluation, diagnosis, and on-going management of these diseases. Related clinical initiatives have also been launched in the region by healthcare systems, the County of San Diego (County), and others.

## Accomplishments

- 1 Creating the region's first clinical guidelines for the screening, evaluation, and management of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.
- 2 Training by Clinical Roundtable members of more than 2,800 local front-line doctors and other providers on the use of the guidelines.
- 3 Creating a mobile app, AlzDxRx, to help physicians use the guidelines for the screening and management of the disease. More than 450 doctors use the tool.
- 4 Boosting training for the next generation of nurses and other health professionals on how to recognize and treat memory loss.
- 5 Setting a goal to become the first region in the nation to have all its emergency departments accredited as geriatric-friendly. Many have now received the national designation, while others are on track to receive it within a year.
- 6 Promoting brain health within San Diego's public health, social service, and healthcare systems, with the help of a \$750,000 Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) state grant awarded to the County last year.



## Ensuring Quality Emergency Care for All

The San Diego region is breaking new ground in its efforts to improve emergency medical care for older residents, including those with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

UC San Diego Health and Alvarado Hospital Medical Center were the first two local health systems to achieve recognition by the American College of Emergency Physicians as accredited Geriatric Emergency Departments. In late 2019, these hospitals teamed up with the Gary and Mary West Health Institute, which is known as a national leader in geriatric care. Through an initiative funded and supported by West Health and the County, and coordinated by the Hospital Association of San Diego and Imperial Counties, 18 local hospitals worked to improve care at their emergency departments.

By the end of 2020, twelve of the hospitals had received formal recognition, with the others awaiting final word. San Diego is on track to become the first region in the nation to have all of its emergency departments fully accredited as senior-friendly by early 2021.

The need for more accommodating emergency departments is especially important for those with dementia. These patients may struggle to understand why they are in a hospital and need care, and may be



UC San Diego Health

 Alvarado Hospital Medical Center

 westhealth

 **HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION**  
of San Diego & Imperial Counties



## Ensuring Quality Emergency Care for All (cont.)

overwhelmed by the unfamiliar sounds, smells, and people. They may feel unsteady because of the patterns on the floor, disoriented by the lights, and panicked by the questions and examinations. Feelings of distress can affect their willingness to cooperate with medical staff and can hinder their medical outcomes.

Local emergency departments are responding by better tailoring care to the needs of all seniors. As part of the accreditation process, they are modifying lights and lowering sounds, where possible, to create a more welcoming environment. Handrails, non-slip floors, and large, old-fashioned analog clocks are being added, while staff training has been boosted to improve interaction with seniors and their families.

With the number of older San Diegans on the rise, including those living with dementia, these timely upgrades will positively impact tens of thousands of lives each year.







# LOOKING AHEAD

## Clinical Roundtable: What is Next?

What's next for the Clinical Roundtable and related efforts:

- Expand healthcare providers' adoption of best practices for the screening, diagnosis, and behavioral management of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.
- In light of COVID-19, explore ways to improve dementia care through telehealth.
- Create tools in multiple languages for primary care providers to promote brain health with their higher risk middle-age patients, a prevention effort aligned with the Healthy Brain Initiative.
- Create new exam room posters in multiple languages that explain the benefits of early diagnosis and prompt patients to talk with their doctor about their brain health.
- Add caregiver assessment tools and resources to the AlzDxRx app.
- Support caregivers by increasing awareness of, and access to, resources that assist them in their caregiving role and that help improve caregivers' own mental and physical health.





## Public Awareness & Education

A strong network of community organizations and the County of San Diego's (County) Aging & Independence Services (AIS) collaborate to educate the public about Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia. The goal is to increase both public and professional awareness of dementia and to equip the community, caregivers, and stakeholders with the resources and skills to support San Diegans living with these diseases.

## Accomplishments

- 1** The County entered into the fifth year of its Age Well San Diego initiative, which is a community effort to make the region more age-friendly and dementia-friendly.
- 2** San Diego joined the global Dementia Friends movement to educate San Diegans about dementia and how to better interact with those living with the condition. Led by Jewish Family Service and AIS staff, the Age Well Dementia-Friendly Team hosted workshops where hundreds of San Diegans became Dementia Friends.
- 3** The San Diego/Imperial Geriatric Education Center, (associated with San Diego State University and UC San Diego) has received several rounds of grant funding since the inception of The Alzheimer's Project. Initiatives funded through the grants have included public service announcements produced by Alzheimer's San Diego. Recent work has focused on training new cohorts of students in the health professions on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and on creating age-friendly health systems.



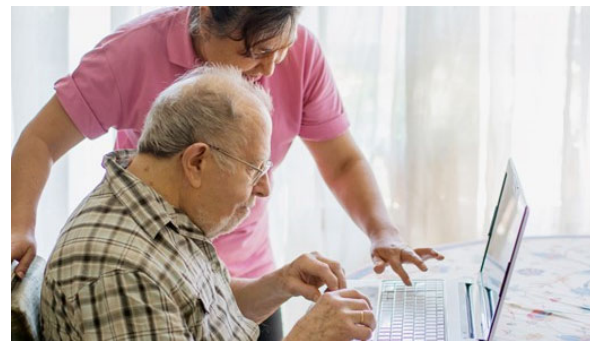
## Adapting Caregiver Support During Challenging Times

Caregiving can be tough during routine times, but there has been nothing routine about the pandemic. One silver lining, however, is how nimbly local organizations moved to adapt their services to an online format. For instance, the Alzheimer's Association San Diego/Imperial Chapter shifted all of their community education classes online, and support groups continued as virtual and phone-based meetings. Southern Caregiver Resource Center moved most of their services online, including care consultation, legal/financial consultations, and short-term counseling by phone or videoconference. Alzheimer's San Diego created the VITALZ program to connect San Diegans with dementia who are living alone to volunteers who do weekly social check-in calls. In addition, Alzheimer's San Diego created a Volunteer Tech Team to provide help with video meeting software so community members can access online workshops and other services. Caregivers can learn more about and access many of these resources simply by going to the organizations' websites.

The Caregiver Coalition of San Diego (Coalition), which includes a diverse group of non-profit and for-profit organizations that serve families caring for their loved ones, adjusted their offerings too. While the group has long-offered webinars with the aim of reaching caregivers who may be unable to attend an in-person

course, in pre-pandemic times the Coalition hosted day-long in-person conferences for caregivers. These conferences typically included several workshops and a resource fair. These "one-stop shop" events connected attendees with dozens of services and products, from private home care providers to medical alert buttons. In light of the pandemic, the Coalition switched to an all-virtual format.

In late 2020, the Coalition teamed up with the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to host a virtual conference on mental health: "Improving Mental Health During COVID-19 and Holidays." Caregivers who help those with dementia and other needs were invited to the online event to learn strategies to cope with ongoing uncertainty and change. The conference focused on building skills to promote resilience and provided information about tools and services offered by NAMI and other community resources. The event's 50 attendees had





# Adapting Caregiver Support During Challenging Times (cont.)

the opportunity to connect with seventeen local organizations through a resource fair in virtual breakout rooms. Conference participants also received the Caregiver Coalition's Caregiver Handbook. Similar conferences are planned for 2021.

The expansion of virtual training and support options will be one of the few positive legacies of the COVID-19 era. Some caregivers now report that they feel less isolated than before the pandemic due to the proliferation of virtual opportunities. While caregiving will always be accompanied by challenges, San Diego caregivers can take comfort in local organizations' steadfast commitment to meet the needs of the caregiving community through education, support, and opportunities to stay connected.



#### Who Should Attend

This conference provides information, advice and support for those caring for loved ones across the age spectrum. Workshop attendees will receive hands-on advice for his or her caregiving challenges.

#### Attendees Will Learn:

- About NAMI San Diego & other community resources.
- Coping Skills during COVID-19 and the Holidays
- Build resilience to manage life Transitions

#### Conference Highlights

- Caregiver Training
- Guided group participation
- Q & A session
- Community experts to help with your caregiver solutions
- Resource rooms with hands-on advice from local caregiving experts
- Caregiving guide available for future reference

In partnership with:



Improving the quality of life for caregivers, their families and the community.



@caregivercoalitionsd

Find us @Caregiver\_SD




Twitter



Instagram

**Join Us for Virtual Caregiver Workshop**  
 "Improving mental health during COVID-19 and the holidays"



**Thursday, December 10, 2020**  
**TIME: 9:30a.m. — 12:30p.m.**

To Register, please visit [Eventbrite](#) or click [here](#)

**"Very smooth and professional process. Many kudos to all the Caregiver Coalition members that put so much time into this event. Speakers were great and timely in their presentation."**

Conference Attendee

**"Thank you for the great presentations and excellent information."**

Conference Attendee

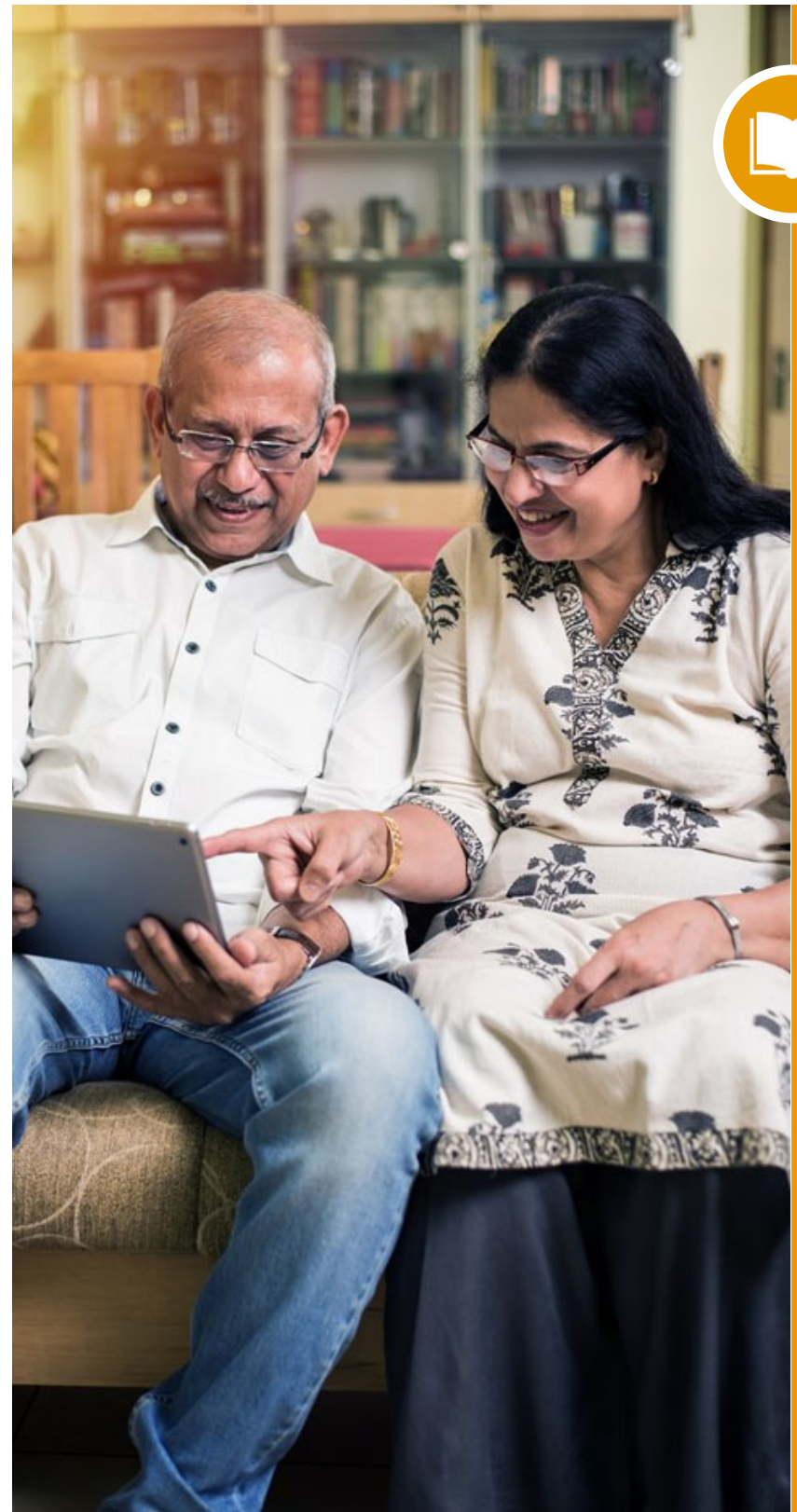
**"This was exceptional."**

Conference Attendee

## Fall Prevention and Dementia

Older adults continued to be at risk for falls despite being asked to stay-at-home during the pandemic. In fact, about 60% of falls occur in the home. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that one in four older adults fall each year. People living with dementia are at even higher risk for falling for a variety of reasons, including changes in visual perception and impaired judgement. For the San Diego Fall Prevention Task Force (Task Force), a team of older adult service providers, it has been important to continue to engage with older adults during the pandemic to educate them about fall prevention and also to help ease the sense of isolation that many older adults may be feeling.

In partnership with the County and Scripps Health, the Task Force hosted a week of free, informative, virtual workshops to tackle isolation while also educating older adults about falls. The event took place from September 21 – 25, 2020, which aligned with California Fall Prevention Awareness Week. This week-long event welcomed a diverse set of speakers who discussed topics ranging from home safety to exercising. Since older adults have been recommended to limit their in-person social interactions, the event schedule was developed to give older adults virtual opportunities to connect with the community, and to engage in physical movement by providing workshops such as Tai Chi and Mind, Body, Balance.





## Fall Prevention and Dementia (cont.)

An important theme the event focused on was neurodegenerative diseases, as is seen in Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. One workshop that addressed these diseases was "Why Does Dementia Increase Fall Risk?" led by Alzheimer's San Diego. The presentation provided information on the physical and cognitive symptoms of dementia that affect fall risk, ways to reduce the risk of falls both at home and while in the community, and available resources for information and assistance. Other workshops relevant to dementia were "Balance for Parkinson's" and "Fall Prevention Conversation Tips for Caregivers," as well as physical movement workshops.

The week-long event highlighted many different ways family members, friends, and professionals can improve the quality of life of people with dementia and improve their safety. The recorded workshops for Fall Prevention Awareness Week 2020 can be viewed by going to [www.SanDiegoFallPrevention.org](http://www.SanDiegoFallPrevention.org).

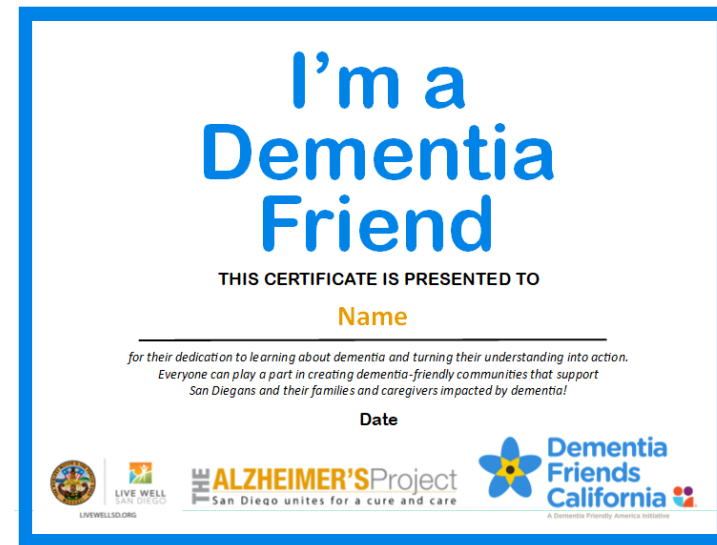


## Dementia Friends Education Goes Virtual

The worldwide Dementia Friends movement, sponsored in the United States by Dementia Friends America, is an effort to educate people from all walks of life about dementia and how to better interact with those living with the condition. AIS has been working to increase awareness about dementia-friendly practices and to increase the number of Dementia Friends in our region. To become a Dementia Friend, an individual attends a brief workshop in which they learn about dementia basics, including common signs and concerning symptoms. Information on effective communication is also presented.

In 2019, the Age Well San Diego Dementia-Friendly Team, chaired by Jewish Family Service, coordinated the region's first Dementia Friends Champions' training. Representatives from local organizations, community stakeholders, and County staff came together for a "train the trainer" seminar to learn more about dementia-friendly best practices and how to spread the word about the movement. Once trained, Champions are able to lead one-hour, in-person Dementia Friends sessions for professionals or community members.

In January 2020, the new Dementia-Friendly Champions hosted four seminars across the region where 54 community members participated to become Dementia Friends. In the weeks that followed, various organizations and community groups expressed interest in the workshop, but due to COVID-19, the momentum was





## **Dementia Friends Education Goes Virtual (cont.)**

quickly halted. However, with the pandemic, there has been a special need for education on and understanding of dementia, and how to best support those living with it in our community. Older adults and those with dementia are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19. These populations have been urged to stay home, which results in a greater risk of isolation – perhaps even more so for those living with dementia who may not fully understand what is going on. To serve those who may benefit, County staff worked with the Dementia Friends America organization to adapt the curriculum and materials to a virtual format.

Promotional materials were developed to spread the word about the sessions to community groups and organizations interested in hosting a workshop. Virtual sessions are now available.

As of December 2020, a total of 27 Dementia Friends Champions have been trained, and 212 people have become Dementia Friends.





## LOOKING AHEAD

### Public Awareness and Education Efforts

- Additional information and resources about brain health and dementia will be incorporated into existing County materials provided to the public.
- A priority of the County's Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) grant will be to increase awareness among the public and clinicians about the higher risk of abuse among people living with dementia.
- HBI will also educate more medical professionals about brain health and provide tools to encourage them to discuss the issue with middle-aged patients to help them avoid or delay the onset of memory loss.
- Through HBI, County staff will work with medical and public health professionals to explore how to better integrate brain health messaging with existing health promotion and prevention messages. For example, exercise is not just good for your heart, it's good for your brain, and staying socially engaged may decrease the risk of cognitive decline.
- The County will update its estimates on the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia across the region through its existing dementia dashboard online (see page 36).



## Collaboration4Cure

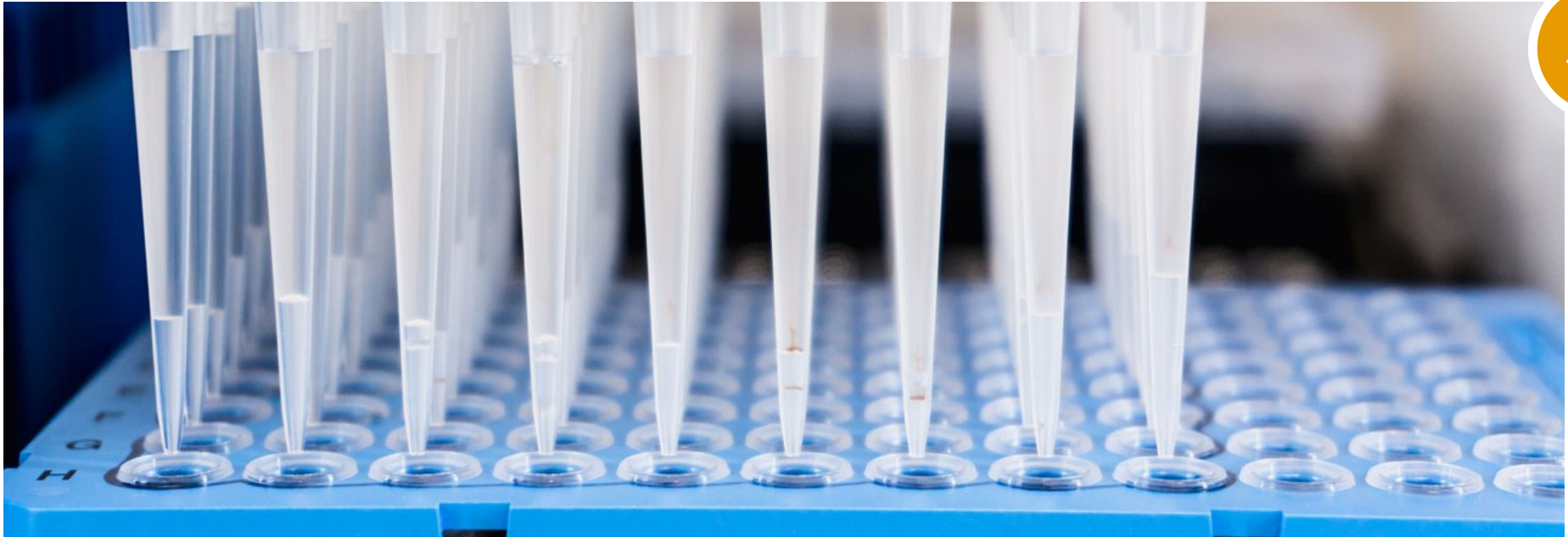
Collaboration4Cure (C4C) brings together researchers, physicians, and biotechnology representatives from San Diego County, who have a shared interest in finding a cure for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. C4C is led by Alzheimer’s San Diego, in partnership with the County of San Diego (County) and City of San Diego, as well as some of the region’s finest research institutes: The Salk Institute; Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute (SBP); Scripps Research; UC San Diego; and the J. Craig Venter Institute. The group established and manages a regional fund that provides resources to support the most promising local research ideas and put them on a path for the discovery and translation of potential new and effective therapies for this disease.

## Accomplishments

- 1 In total, C4C has supported 16 innovative drug discovery research projects since its inception in 2015.
- 2 C4C support has resulted in a total of \$8.73 Million in grant funds from the National Institute of Aging division of the National Institutes of Health.

### Partners





## The Importance of C4C's Approach

C4C is a novel research incubator created by San Diego's world-class scientists, Alzheimer's San Diego, and the County. It fills a gap in early-stage research funding when it's critical to secure funds but difficult to do so. C4C supports promising local projects early to enable them to reach the point where they could receive federal grants. The goal is to open up new avenues of drug-discovery research that could someday lead to a cure or treatment for the disease.

Prominent San Diego philanthropist Darlene Shiley lost her husband, Donald Shiley, in 2010 to a series of strokes complicated by vascular dementia. Her mother, an aunt, and an uncle also died from Alzheimer's disease. Darlene Shiley jump-started the C4C effort with major donations, and the County has allocated seed money as well.

Today, projects supported by C4C have gone on to receive a total of \$8.73 million from the federal National Institute on Aging – including \$7.46 million in 2020 alone. These grants illustrate the early impact of C4C's ambitious efforts and shows how critical this local research is to finding a cure.



## Research Projects Supported by C4C

Researchers working with C4C are looking to promote the best ideas and put them on a translational path towards effective therapies. The projects funded so far are seeking:

- Novel ways to block the effects of the Corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF), a protein hormone whose release is triggered by stress. Studies have linked increased brain expression of the receptor for CRF as a risk factor for developing Alzheimer's. Leading the work is Dr. Robert A. Rissman, a UC San Diego and Veterans Medical Research Foundation neurologist, with the help of a \$1.73 million federal grant.
- New compounds that might provide the starting points for the development of safer and more effective drugs to control ephA4, a receptor that allows brain cells to communicate and is linked to neurodegenerative processes. Dr. Elena B. Pasquale and Dr. Eduard Sergienko, both with SBP, are leading the effort. The project received a \$3.02 million federal grant.





## Research Projects Supported by C4C (cont.)

- Ways to modulate the activity of Striatal-Enriched Tyrosine Phosphatase, a protein that is believed to interfere with the brain's ability to communicate and is tied to symptoms of cognitive and behavioral decline. Dr. Lutz Tautz at SBP is spearheading the effort, drawing on a \$2.71 million federal grant.
- Increased understanding of a gene called TREM2, mutations of which are known to correlate with a significantly increased risk of developing late-onset Alzheimer's. SBP's Dr. Michael R. Jackson served as the Principal Investigator for this \$1.27 million grant-funded research project.



# Online Resources



The screenshot shows the 'AGING ROADMAP' page on the website. It features a navigation menu at the top with links for 'ABOUT', 'NEWS & EVENTS', 'PARTNERS', 'LIVEWELLSD.ORG', 'COMMUNITY', 'DATA & RESULTS', and 'TOPICS'. The main content area includes a title 'AGING ROADMAP', a brief introduction, and a section titled 'WHAT IS THE ROADMAP?' which lists key goals and strategies. A graphic at the bottom illustrates the roadmap's focus on various aspects of aging, such as health, housing, and transportation.

## Aging Roadmap

[www.livewellsd.org/agingroadmap](http://www.livewellsd.org/agingroadmap)

## The Alzheimer's Project

[www.sdalzheimersproject.org](http://www.sdalzheimersproject.org)



The screenshot displays the 'ALZHEIMER'S PROJECT' website. It features a header with the project name and a navigation menu. The main content area includes a title 'Alzheimer's is the 3rd leading cause of death in San Diego County', a sub-header 'ALZHEIMER'S PROJECT', and a list of key findings. Below the text are four icons representing different areas of focus: 'RESEARCH & EDUCATION', 'POLICY & PROGRAMS', 'SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS', and 'PUBLIC AWARENESS & SOLUTIONS'.



The screenshot shows the 'Health & Human Services Agency' website. It features a navigation menu at the top and a main content area with a title 'The Community Health Statistics Unit'. Below the title is a section titled 'NHIS 2011-2013 Public Health Data' which includes a chart and text. The page also features several icons and links for various services and programs.

## Data on Alzheimer's in San Diego County

[www.sdhealthstatistics.com](http://www.sdhealthstatistics.com)

# Acknowledgements – 2020 Partners

## Care Roundtable

Dianne Jacob, former San Diego County Supervisor District 2 (Committee Chairwoman)

ActivCare

Aging & Independence Services Advisory Council

Alliance Healthcare Foundation

Alvarado Hospital Medical Center

Consumer Center for Health Education and Advocacy

County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Aging & Independence Services (AIS)

County of San Diego HHSA, Public Health Services (PHS)

ElderHelp of San Diego

Home Instead Senior Care

Noah Homes

Point Loma Nazarene University

Public Authority, San Diego County In-Home Supportive Services

San Diego/Imperial Geriatric Education Center

Scripps Health

San Diego County Medical Society

San Diego County Sheriff's Department

San Diego State University

San Diego Union-Tribune

Stellar Care

UC San Diego

San Diego Military and Veterans Advisory Council

*Note:* The Care Roundtable also includes informal family caregivers who are not affiliated with a particular organization

## Clinical Roundtable

Michael Lobatz, MD, Scripps Health, The Neurology Center of Southern California (Committee Co-Chairperson)

Nicholas Yphantides, MD, MPH, Medical Care Services, HHSA, County of San Diego (Committee Co-Chairperson)

Alvarado Hospital Medical Center

Alzheimer's Association San Diego/Imperial Chapter

Alzheimer's San Diego

Champions for Health (formerly San Diego County Medical Society Foundation)

County of San Diego HHSA, AIS

The Elizabeth Hospice

# Acknowledgements – 2020 Partners

The George G. Glenner Alzheimer's Family Centers, Inc.  
Kaiser Permanente  
The Neurology Center of Southern California  
Scripps Health  
Sharp HealthCare  
Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Group  
Southern Caregiver Resource Center  
UC San Diego  
UC San Diego Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer's Disease Research Center

## **Collaboration4Cure**

Alzheimer's San Diego  
City of San Diego  
County of San Diego  
The Salk Institute  
Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute  
Scripps Health  
Scripps Research  
Darlene Shiley, Caregiver/Philanthropist  
UC San Diego

## **Public Awareness**

Alzheimer's Association, San Diego/Imperial Chapter  
Alzheimer's San Diego  
Consumer Advocates for RCFE Reform (CARR)  
ComForCare Home Care – East County San Diego  
Compassion & Choices  
County of San Diego, HHSA, AIS  
County of San Diego, HHSA, PHS  
ElderHelp of San Diego  
The George G. Glenner Alzheimer's Family Centers, Inc.  
Jewish Family Service of San Diego  
Luib Health Center  
St. Paul's Senior Services  
Senior Life Source  
Southern Caregiver Resource Center  
UC San Diego Health









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# **THE ALZHEIMER'S** Project

San Diego unites for a cure and care



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