

Alzheimer's Update

2002 Jail Personnel Training

Due to the ever-increasing dementia population, the importance of understanding how to effectively deal with a person who has Alzheimer's disease is growing. Because of this need, our committee has developed a one-day training curriculum for jail personnel. Topics include an Alzheimer's/dementia overview, recognizing and identifying Alzheimer's symptoms and behaviors, interventions for dealing with Alzheimer's inside a jail environment, an overview of community resources including Project Lifesaver using the CareTrak search system, and the Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return Program.

The training is geared toward classification officers, central processing, social workers, medical staff, and jail officers. However, anyone interested is welcome to attend. A registration form will be sent to Sheriff's and regional jails early next year. This is a DCJS sponsored training offering in-service credit hours. There is no cost to attend the training.

Tentative dates for this training are as follows:

Richmond: March 6, 2002

Northern Virginia: March 20, 2002

Western Virginia: May 8, 2002

Tidewater: May 22, 2002

Research Continues Effort to Develop a Vaccine for Alzheimer's Disease

Vaccine looks hopeful as clinical trials enter important second phase. An experimental Alzheimer's vaccine, called AN-1792, is designed to stimulate the immune system to wipe out **amyloid plaques** in the brain. The vaccine won't be able to return dead brain cells and certainly can't return memories, but it could potentially **arrest the disease** in whatever stage the individual is in.

Trials will continue with small numbers of participants at this point; conclusive findings are not expected for another 2–3 years. For more information on current research and medications, contact your local Alzheimer's Association.

The western Virginia Chapters of the Alzheimer's Association have merged as of November 1, 2001. The merged chapters are now referred to as the Central and Western Virginia Chapter. The Chapter Headquarters is in Charlottesville, and Regional Offices are located in Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg and Roanoke. The Chapter telephone number is 804-973-6122 or 888-809-7383.

What are **amyloid plaques**? The formation of amyloid plaques begins with the production of amyloid precursor protein (APP). The normal function of this protein in the brain is still being investigated. Scientists have determined, however, that it is normally broken down into harmless, soluble fragments. In Alzheimer's disease, certain enzymes attach to the protein (APP) creating a form of beta-amyloid that forms insoluble, thread-like structures called amyloid fibrils. These fibrils, in turn, combine to form plaques. Amyloid plaques are abnormal structures that are characteristic of Alzheimer's. The plaques form and accumulate on cells, causing cell damage and cell death. *Source: Advances, Fall 2001*

Alzheimer's Training Credited for Successful Search and Rescue

Wintergreen, Virginia On August 18, 2001, the Wintergreen PD received a dispatch from Bill Smith*, about his wife, Mary*, who has Alzheimer's disease. Mary had walked away from her home and was missing.

Sgt. Joe Davis and Patrolman John Ellwood responded to the scene. Coincidentally, due to the increasing number of seniors in their community, Chief of Police, Stanley Olah had sent both officers to attend a DCJS sponsored Alzheimer's training. Fortunately, they attended training in Charlottesville just a few months prior to this incident.

Upon arriving at the scene, Mr. Smith told the officers that he and Mary were outside their house in their yard when Mary asked if they could go for a walk. Mr. Smith had gone inside the house to get their two dogs and when he came back outside a few minutes later, Mary had disappeared. He reported that she had been missing for about one hour before he called the police.

After a quick search of the house and the general area, the Wintergreen Fire and Rescue set up a command post and began organizing a search. A full-blown search was then activated within the county and by a state search team.

Sgt. Davis and Officer Ellwood went back to talk to Mr. Smith a second time to obtain more information about Mary and take a report. Because Mr. Smith was understandably distraught, the officers did what they could to make him feel more at ease with them. The officers tried to obtain some information about what stage of the disease process Mary was in, information about her history, and what type of activities the couple did in the past. After some time, Mr. Smith brought up the fact that they used to walk on a golf cart path and hike a particular trail about ½ mile away. A sighting had already been reported on the golf course near the trail. Sgt. Davis relayed the information about where the couple used to hike on the trail to the search and rescue team.

Mary was located wandering on that trail 15 minutes later.

Total elapsed time for the search: 5 hours and 20 minutes

Sgt. Davis and Officer Ellwood found out that day how valuable our Alzheimer's training can be. Sgt. Davis felt that learning how to communicate with a spouse and understanding how to use the information to his advantage was the most valuable aspect of the training for him. He also believes it is very important for **all officers and emergency personnel** to have a basic understanding and awareness of this disease and hopes that the Alzheimer's training will be reinforced at all the academies in Virginia.

On behalf of our committee members, I would like to thank Sgt. Davis and Officer Ellwood for sharing their story with us. We commend both of you for a job well done and hope others will be able to learn from your experience!

*Names have been changed.

East Coast Alzheimer's Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC

Plans are underway to host an East Coast Conference for criminal justice personnel in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina in late September/October of 2002. The agenda will include information about responding to calls for service geared to law enforcement, communication, jail officers, criminal justice trainers, and agency command staff. An entire day will be devoted to search and rescue including demonstrations and detailed information about how you can get programs such as Project Lifesaver started in your area. All criminal justice personnel are welcome to attend! Pencil it in on your calendars and keep watching for more information!

Have a story you'd like to share with us? We'd like to hear from you! You can e-mail your story to Juliana Skone at jskone@dcjs.state.va.us. Questions? Call (757) 721-7185.