

# In Honor of Caregivers

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Every November 1<sup>st</sup> marks the beginning of National Alzheimer's Awareness Month, bringing an opportunity for recognizing and remembering everyone affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. While you might see purple ribbons and signs highlighting Alzheimer's Awareness month, you might not realize that November also marks National Family Caregiving month. Although this month is not specific to dementia family caregivers, I wanted to take a little time to share some thoughts.

I'm currently reading a book called *On Fire* by John O'Leary. *On Fire* shares the story of Mr. O'Leary's recovery and the caregivers who helped care and support him when over 90% of his body was burned as a child. He shares many raw, emotional stories that highlight his caregivers' actions. Although many of his stories focus on positive affirmation and praise for his accomplishments, many also highlight his caregivers pushing and forcing him to do things that although ultimately benefited him in his recovery, were painful and uncomfortable in the moment.

I see many parallels with Mr. O'Leary's description of his caregivers and the dementia family caregivers I see every day. As a dementia caregiver, they are combining roles of physician, nurse, social worker, chef, housekeeper, therapist, activity director, companion, etc. into one. There are many actions that are necessary to do each day, but may not be welcomed by the person they are caring for. I often describe caregiving as a thankless job. It can definitely feel that way, especially facing resistance at every turn. Think about the family who finally sells the car because they have witnessed their mom have several accidents and be unsafe on the road. What about the spouse who is trying to accomplish just one shower that week, as their wife is not able to do it herself. For our loved ones who are living with dementia, and therefore a different reality, they might not always see this sacrifice and purpose from their caregivers. But I'm here to tell you, on behalf of the dementia community, we see you. We see your sacrifice, we see your selflessness, we see your compassion. You matter, and are providing support to your loved ones in ways that no one else could.

This month, in honor of National Family Caregiving month, please do something as kind for yourself as you do for others. If you have a family member or friend who is a caregiver, share how much you appreciate them in your words and actions.

*For more information about Memory Moment articles & Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness, check out their website at [www.effinghamalz.org](http://www.effinghamalz.org). If you are a caregiver & have specific questions or situations you would like information on, please feel free to call Shannon Nosbisch at 217-663-0010 or Amy Sobrino at 618-363-8372.*