

Back where it all began  
*Written by Amy Sobrino, MSW, LCSW*

2019 marks the start of our fourth year of writing this monthly article, *Memory Moment*. We're continually humbled and appreciative of our many partners, helping us build awareness of Alzheimer's and related dementia. We've accomplished a lot in the past several years, and are excited for new opportunities to help support our community! For this month's article, I wanted to revisit my first *Memory Moment*, originally published back in January 2016. Like many people, my motivation for this work comes from my own personal experience with Alzheimer's disease.

Like many Americans, my first experience was when a family member, my grandma, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2002.

My relationship with my grandma was special. Growing up only a mile away from her home, I visited often and enjoyed her being a constant figure in my life. When my parents told me about her diagnosis of Alzheimer's, I was not able to grasp what it meant or how this would affect our family. I soon found out though, how devastating this disease was. The next twelve years were spent caring for her, first in her home, then in a local long-term care community. Alzheimer's took away what made her unique, and her care put an immeasurable strain on my family as we tried to adapt to the unpredictability of the disease.

The sad part of our story is our family's experience is not unique. Nearly every person I meet has been touched by Alzheimer's, whether a loved one has died from this disease or they are currently caring for a loved one. This horrible disease touches almost every family.

The truly devastating part is that we are not talking about how we can support our fellow neighbors in need. There is a lot of stigma that surrounds Alzheimer's and other dementia, which makes living with the disease as well as the job of caring for a loved one isolating. If you have cared for a person living with this disease, the best gift you can give to a family who is just starting their caregiving journey is an "I understand. I have been where you are at right now. I'm here for you."

My grandmother's journey with Alzheimer's inspired me to become a geriatric social worker, and to begin researching ways we could support families dealing with dementia. After my grandmother died from the disease in 2014, my Mom, Shannon Nosbisch, and I began Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness in the hopes of helping families who are in similar situations as we once were. We help get information about dementia and caregiving out in the community through education programs and our Forget-Me-Not Resource Center at the Effingham Public Library, as well as our monthly articles *Memory Moment* and *Forget-Me-Not Spotlight*.

Our hope for these monthly articles is to provide a little insight and information about Alzheimer's disease, different types of dementia, caregiving, and healthy aging, but most of all, to support those who are living with this disease right now and to those taking care of those who do. To all of you reading this right now, you are not alone.

*Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness (EAAA) is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organization founded to provide education and support to all families, caregivers, and people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia in Effingham County and the surrounding area. For more information about 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.*