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“This opportunity allows us to bring awareness to our lawmakers at a local and national level,” April said. “We’re very fortunate to have this opportunity to work with Senator Paul, Congressman Guthrie, and their staffs which allows us to bring our cause to their attention.”

According to Beth, a victory in the fight against Alzheimer’s has been the Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure for Alzheimer’s Act. It was passed in Congress thanks to Guthrie and its advocates. President Donald J. Trump signed the act into law last year. The BOLD Act will create a public health infrastructure to support prevention, treatment, and care for patients with Alzheimer’s and related diseases.

Throughout the year, the sisters and their families also advocate for Alzheimer’s awareness through their walk team, Team Meredith. The team hosts different events for raising awareness and for fundraising.

“We usually have many people stop by or message us to talk about their connections to the disease,” April said. “Beth and I have a Facebook page for Team Meredith where we post events and opportunities to raise awareness. Just this past year, we were able to have the month of June declared Alzheimer’s Awareness Month in Edmonson County by our County Judge Executive.”

April said the family also participates in the Walk to End Alzheimer’s. This event takes place in Bowling Green on September 12 of this year.

“This is a fantastic gathering of hundreds of local advocates working to help raise funds for research and support of caregivers,” April said. “...Anyone can join or form a team and join us to show support for Alzheimer’s awareness. I’ve found in opening ourselves up to discuss our experiences and including in our efforts to raise funds and awareness, that people are becoming more comfortable talking about what they are going through and the struggles they face when caring for a loved one with Alzheimer’s. The more we can talk about Alzheimer’s and support those with this disease and their caregivers, the more awareness we can bring to our end goal which is finding a cure.”

Having lost Nannie and other family members to the disease, Beth said she cherishes the memories of life before Alzheimer’s.

“The way I choose to remember Nannie is by the memories we had prior to her diagnosis,” Beth said. “The times where she let me make an obstacle course in her living room. The times she fixed me an after school snack. The times she cared for me when I was sick. The times she showed me how to break green beans on a hot summer day. The list could go on. I also appreciate the love that I share with my family. When you go through a journey such



Having personally witnessed the affects of Alzheimer’s on individuals and families, Beth Harp, left, and April Hennon are Alzheimer’s Congressional Team Members. They attended the 2019 Alzheimer’s Impact Movement Advocacy Forum in Washington D.C.



Members of Team Meredith join together to organize fundraisers, such as this bake sale in 2017, to raise money for the Alzheimer’s Association. Pictured are: Kyndal Harp, Beth Harp, Meredith Hennon. April Hennon Sydney Hennon, Makinley Harp, Michael Meredith, Sharon Meredith, Ray Harp, Laurie Mills, and John Michael Mills.

as Alzheimer’s disease, you learn that you have to lean on each other to survive.”

Through their family’s personal experience, both Beth and April said that it is important for the caregivers of Alzheimer’s patients to have the support they need as well.

“For someone with a family member newly diagnosed, I would love to encourage them to seek out assistance and guidance,” Beth said. “There are so many resources available that our family wasn’t aware of at all. At the time of Nannie’s diagnosis, the internet wasn’t nearly as popular as it is today. A great place to start is with the Alzheimer’s Association. They have caregiver support phone lines as well as many other resources that are available for patients and families.

“Reach out for help,” April said. “Caretakers carry an immense load on their shoulders. Taking care of someone with Alzheimer’s is not only physically draining, but emotionally and mentally draining. Use the resources available to you and take advantage of any support provided.”

Above all, the sisters

said, is to never give up on loved ones who are battling the disease.

“Become an advocate for your family member with dementia,” Beth said. “You will become their voice. Speak to your loved one about their wishes regarding their life and how they want to live it. Most importantly, talk to them about life. Don’t leave them out. Ask them to tell stories about their childhood. Record their voices. Take their picture. Cherish the moments.”

“...Understand that things are different once Alzheimer’s progresses, but your loved one is still there with you,” April added. “Try to find the good within the bad. Small moments are important. There are lots of people all working toward finding a cure, and my sincere hope is that one is coming in the near future.”

For more information about Alzheimer’s and dementia and the research surrounding the disease, or to reach out for help and support, visit the Alzheimer’s Association website at www.alz.org. You can also call the association’s 24/7 helpline at 800-272-3900.



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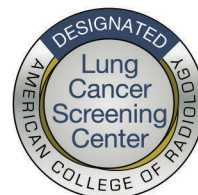
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