

Speech for Virginia Federation Convention

Richmond, VA

April 2011

As all of you know, NARFE's mission is to "safeguard and improve the earned rights and benefits of America's active and retired federal employees." We know your primary goal isn't to raise money for Alzheimer's disease research, but we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for making it a top priority. You do it because you understand that every 69 seconds, someone develops Alzheimer's disease in the United States. Because you know none of the current pharmaceuticals are good enough to stop this disease. And because you know Alzheimer's disease is the leading health epidemic of the 21st century and it cannot be ignored.

Over the past 25 years, NARFE members raised over \$9 million toward Alzheimer's disease research. This is more than any other membership organization supporting the Alzheimer's Association today and this is something to be proud of. We cannot do this without your dedication.

A huge thank you to all of the Virginia delegates! Your hard work and dedication to this disease lead Virginia to be the top fundraising Federation for FY2010. From July 2009 to June 2010 you raised \$66,270 for Alzheimer's research.

Now is a very exciting time to be a NARFE delegate as you make your way toward your next goal of \$10 million! Thank you for committing to this remarkable gift. We look forward to helping you in any way that we can as you work to achieve this goal.

Through the end of March, the Virginia Federation has raised \$59,498! Yesterday, during the breakout sessions I told the group that this figure was 16% of the total donations we've received from NARFE so far this fiscal year. You are well on your way to having another successful year and making an impact on your \$10 million goal.

So where is Alzheimer's disease at today?

Today, there are an estimated 5.4 million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease. Of those 5.4 million; 5.2 million people are age 65 and over; and 200,000 have younger-onset Alzheimer's disease. Younger-onset Alzheimer's disease has been found in individuals as young as 30. One in eight people over 65 are living with the disease and nearly half of those 85 and over have it as well.

Recently, we have found that women are more impacted by Alzheimer's disease than men. This past October, Alzheimer's advocate Maria Shriver joined forces with the Alzheimer's Association to produce *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Takes on Alzheimer's*. This comprehensive book of testimonials and essays takes a look at some of the women living with or caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease.

From this report we have learned that nearly 2/3 of all Americans living with Alzheimer's disease are women. They also comprise 60 percent of the unpaid caregivers for family members and friends with Alzheimer's. That means there are 10 million women who either have Alzheimer's or are caring for someone with the disease. Of the 5.2 million Americans over the age of 65 living with Alzheimer's disease – 3.4 million are women, and 1.8 million are men. This is explained by the fact that women, on average, live longer than men.

Alzheimer's disease research also isn't getting the necessary government funding that is needed to make the critical advances that will hopefully find a cure for Alzheimer's disease. Today, we invest only \$100 in Alzheimer's research for every \$28,000 our country spends to care for those with Alzheimer's and other dementias. If we had a research advance that simply delayed the onset of Alzheimer's by approximately five years, we would cut costs dramatically, potentially saving trillions of dollars over the coming years. The Alzheimer's Association is raising concern about this disease worldwide, but we cannot do it alone. We need dedication and support from organizations like NARFE to help us move forward in the fight against Alzheimer's disease.

Luckily we have generous contributions from NARFE to help us in our fight. Since 1985, NARFE has been supporting the Alzheimer's Association's battle against Alzheimer's disease. With 49 research grants under your belt you have helped us make great strides in Alzheimer's research.

For the first time in 27 years, new diagnostic criteria and guidelines have been published. The initial diagnostic criteria for the disease were published by the Alzheimer's Association and the National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke in 1984. The new criteria and guidelines are the result of work that began two years ago, when three expert workgroups consisting of a total of more than 40 Alzheimer's researchers and clinicians from around the globe began the in-depth process of reviewing the original criteria and deciding how they might be improved by incorporating research advances from the last three decades. Formation of the workgroups was spearheaded by the Alzheimer's Association and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) of the National Institutes of Health.

There are 2 notable differences from the original set of criteria to the new set.

1. They identify three stages of the disease, with the first beginning before symptoms such as memory loss occur and before one's ability to carry out everyday activities are affected

The original criteria require memory loss and a decline in thinking abilities severe enough to affect daily life.

2. They incorporate biomarker tests (tests that measure biological changes in the brain associated with Alzheimer's).

The original criteria were based chiefly on a doctor's clinical judgment about the cause of a patient's symptoms. There is a general consensus among the NIH and Alzheimer's Association that treating Alzheimer's disease before the symptoms occur has the most potential for slowing down the progression.

As more is learned about Alzheimer's disease, that new knowledge will be incorporated into the diagnostic criteria and guidelines as they continue to evolve. Each funded research grant brings us one step closer to finding a treatment, prevention or a potential cure for Alzheimer's disease. But we don't know which grant will make that critical breakthrough.

We have also recently introduced a new program called Trial Match. Found on our Alz.org website, Trial Match helps match those interested in participating in clinical trials with a trial near them. You can volunteer whether you are currently living with Alzheimer's disease or even if you are a healthy participant. The website requires you to put in a little bit of information about yourself and will then match you up with trials being held in your area.

Alzheimer's research cannot move forward without clinical trials to test out theories or potential pharmaceuticals. If you are interested in participating in a clinical trial please let me know and I can forward you the link to the website or show you how to sign up.

If we don't stop Alzheimer's disease now, by the year 2050, 16 million people could be living with it in the United States. NARFE's 300,000 members can help those 5.4 million currently battling Alzheimer's disease and the countless caregivers, family members and friends who are impacted by the disease daily.

You have the power and potential to end Alzheimer's disease for future generations. We thank the entire Virginia Federation for your consistent devotion to our cause.