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**Recruiting Alzheimer's Association Volunteers from All Walks of Life**

Hailey Seipel

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Recruiting Alzheimer’s Association Volunteers from All Walks of Life

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MCOM 695: Thesis/Project
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Introduction

The Alzheimer’s Association is a national nonprofit organization that exists to cure dementia. To achieve this, the Association’s 78 chapters spanning the U.S. regularly recruit volunteers to help plan and coordinate annual fundraisers, such as the Walk to End Alzheimer’s. However, since the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Association has not been able to recruit enough volunteers for its fundraising events. With insufficient volunteers, the Alzheimer’s Association cannot host high quality fundraisers and receive the sizable donations needed to fund breakthrough dementia research studies and discover a cure. As a result, Association staff are spread too thin and rely too much on unpaid volunteer labor to function. The Alzheimer’s Association does not currently have a volunteer recruitment strategy in place that specifically targets people from multiple age groups. Thus, this strategic communications plan recommends the Association start with three small towns within the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter that struggle the most to recruit volunteers for the region’s Walk to End Alzheimer’s fundraising events. The following plan and research aim to be expanded upon to suit larger cities across the country.

Background

External Environment

Like other nonprofit organizations, the Alzheimer’s Association is fighting to emerge from the economic downturn of COVID-19 that hit volunteer recruitment and retention efforts especially hard. Mass budget cuts and paid position layoffs during the pandemic forced nonprofits, such as the Association, to expect more work from limited staffing and current volunteers. Americans are also more selective about donating their time and money to charities due to post-pandemic income changes, yet the Association provides an important cause to support. Socially, younger adults have the energy and fresh ideas to revamp fundraising events, and they are
motivated to volunteer when it offers flexibility within their busy schedules; on the other hand, older adults have the financial means to contribute large donations that will encourage other donors to join the fight, and they are motivated to volunteer when they are not at risk of getting sick.

**Industry**

The Alzheimer’s Association gives many groups the opportunity to volunteer for a worthy cause. University and college students who are enrolled in healthcare degree programs and involved in clubs need volunteer offerings to fulfill community service requirements and improve student mental health. Local employers need volunteer offerings to boost employee retention rates, recruit new employees, and demonstrate their commitment to philanthropy. Finally, retirees need volunteer offerings to get involved in their community and improve their own quality of life. Thus, the Walk to End Alzheimer’s events provide many benefits to individuals of all ages and abilities.

**Market Share & Competition**

There are other nonprofit organizations in the U.S. that raise funds for dementia studies and provide support services for people affected by the disease. However, large-scale competitors cannot match the Association’s reputation as the world’s largest funder of Alzheimer’s disease research, nor can they match the Association’s volume of annual volunteer opportunities.

The primary small-scale competition is time. An increased workload for paid Association staff and current volunteers limits their time to recruit volunteers. Several factors such as work, family, school, finances, and other volunteer obligations also compete for individuals’ time to volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association. The secondary small-scale competition is location. The top three sites for Walk to End Alzheimer’s events within the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter that have the most difficulty recruiting active volunteers are small towns.
Stakeholder Research

The Alzheimer’s Association has several stakeholder groups that are impacted by insufficient volunteer recruitment. Paid staff in leadership and management are pressured to fill in workload gaps due to budget cuts and layoffs, further reinforcing the Association’s reliance on volunteer labor to operate. Current volunteers who serve on decision-making committees as well as assist with recruiting volunteers and organizing fundraising events are at a higher risk of burning out due to assuming more unpaid duties. Corporate sponsors and other donors are less eager to give away money to a charity with lackluster fundraising events. Alzheimer’s disease patients as well as their caregivers and families have fewer reliable support services. Scientific researchers lack the funds to cover studies and trials needed to advance breakthroughs and discover dementia treatments. Finally, students, employers, and retirees within Association regions like the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter have one less opportunity to get involved with their local community. Prospective volunteers are diffused stakeholders because they have less frequent interactions with the Association, and they often get involved during a crisis. Otherwise, most Alzheimer’s Association stakeholders are functional because they provide labor and resources, or they consume the organization’s products and services.

No matter their background, Alzheimer’s Association stakeholders widely support its mission and want to fight for the first dementia survivors. These stakeholders recognize the importance of funding dementia research. Most Alzheimer’s Association stakeholders are also emotionally connected to the disease, and that connection drives their regular participation and loyalty to the cause.
Internal Environment

The Alzheimer’s Association has a national headquarters and 78 regional chapters that span the country. Each chapter comprises a few offices that oversee all fundraising efforts for a region. The Minnesota-North Dakota chapter is responsible for 17 Walk to End Alzheimer’s events each year alone. Although paid staff in leadership and management develop the Association’s overall strategy, the various volunteer-led groups must do the work to achieve the organization’s goals.

Outside of its nationwide staff and volunteer groups, the Alzheimer’s Association has a high profile due to its many successful promotions. The Association’s positive reputation as a global leader in Alzheimer’s disease and dementia care and research is unsullied.

Service

More than six million Americans live with Alzheimer’s disease. An additional 11 million people provide unpaid care for friends or family members with dementia each year. Alzheimer’s disease also kills more Americans than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined. Therefore, the services that the Alzheimer’s Association provides are very meaningful to the dementia community. Alzheimer’s patients, caregivers, and other supporters with a personal connection to the disease are widespread defenders of the Alzheimer’s Association. Without organizations like the Association, people affected by dementia cannot fund vital research advances, access resources and emotional support, and learn more about Alzheimer’s disease.

Promotions

The Alzheimer’s Association does an excellent job at raising awareness about the disease through its many general marketing campaigns, social media content, and newsletter outreach efforts. Association content leverages stories from celebrities and the public, reinforcing the organization’s credibility in the Alzheimer’s and dementia community. However, the Association
does not run many long-term campaigns solely focused on recruiting volunteers. Rather, volunteer-specific content increases when Alzheimer’s Association fundraising events are fast approaching.

Resources

Nationally, the Alzheimer’s Association has hundreds of employees from different areas who are equally responsible for recruiting volunteers, but fewer employees organize annual fundraising events, such as Walk to End Alzheimer’s. The Minnesota-North Dakota chapter has only two main staff members who lead recruitment efforts and manage the entire region’s Walks.

On average, the Association allocates $75 million (or less than 20% of its total revenue) for national fundraising and volunteer recruitment efforts. If these funds are spread evenly, each regional chapter receives about $960,000 every year. With this significant budget, the Alzheimer’s Association uses various paid and free promotional techniques. These funds are also used to cover costs associated with event space, food, and entertainment, though local corporate sponsors may still donate some of these assets.
**SWOT Analysis**

**Strengths**
- **Overall support** – stakeholders from all walks of life want the Association to succeed and achieve its mission.
- **Organizational credibility** – the Association has a good reputation of creating content that features celebrities and the public, showing the widespread effect of the disease on people’s lives.

**Weaknesses**
- **Post-COVID world** – the Association offers mostly in-person volunteering events, but younger adults seek greater flexibility than some in-person events can provide, and some older adults are at risk of getting sick from in-person interactions.
- **Small town sites** – the top three Walk locations in the MN-ND chapter that struggle the most with volunteer recruitment (Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd) are small towns.

**Opportunities**
- **School partnerships** – higher education clubs and programs that require volunteer hours can allow the Association to target young adults.
- **Job satisfaction** – employers near regional chapter events can offer employees a satisfactory way to give back, improving retention rates.
- **Better quality of life** – retirees near regional chapter events can get involved in their community and use their resources to make a difference.

**Threats**
- **Lack of urgency** – legislators do not consider Alzheimer’s disease and dementia as national public health crises despite the huge impact.
- **Burnout risk** – paid staff and unpaid volunteers will burn out more quickly if low volunteer participation continues.
- **Insufficient research funds** – long-term volunteer recruitment issues may cause the Association to not raise enough money needed to fund studies that will advance dementia treatment breakthroughs, thereby losing relevance and credibility.
Situation Analysis

The Alzheimer’s Association is a national nonprofit organization that funds research to find a cure for Alzheimer’s disease and other dementia. The Association hosts annual fundraising events, including Walk to End Alzheimer’s, through its regional chapters. The Minnesota-North Dakota chapter oversees 17 Walk events in cities of all sizes. The Association gives people affected by the disease the opportunity to connect with others who are going through a similar experience, access support resources, and spread awareness—all while advancing breakthrough research.

However, since the COVID-19 global pandemic, the Alzheimer’s Association has struggled to secure enough volunteers to serve on Walk planning committees and set up the events. The Minnesota-North Dakota chapter has only one paid staff member in charge of managing the region’s volunteer recruitment efforts and another paid staff member who directs the region’s Walks. Thus, the chapter (and national organization) relies heavily on volunteers to operate. Local organizers are concerned that the quality of Walk to End Alzheimer’s events will decline, the morale of current volunteers will worsen, and families impacted by the disease will continue to suffer if the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter cannot recruit enough volunteers.

Core Problem & Opportunity

The core problem for the Alzheimer’s Association Minnesota-North Dakota chapter is not having enough volunteers in this post-COVID world to engage with the organization’s meaningful cause. As a result, the Association’s current workforce is being spread too thin to host crucial fundraisers, including the Walk to End Alzheimer’s events. However, there is an opportunity for the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter to focus its volunteer recruitment efforts specifically in small towns, whose event sites consistently struggle the most.
Action Plan

Goals & Objectives

Goal

Build relationships with small-town residents of all ages to increase consistent volunteer participation that supports annual Walk to End Alzheimer’s fundraising events in Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd, all located in Minnesota.

Objectives

1. Within one year, raise awareness of the Association’s Minnesota-North Dakota chapter volunteer opportunities amongst college students, business leaders, and retirees to 80%. This objective will be measured by contracted surveys of the local communities at the beginning and end of 2025.

2. Within two years, create a pipeline of volunteers from local colleges, businesses, and community centers that will allow the Alzheimer’s Association to recruit at least 50 volunteers for all three Walk events combined.

3. Within two years, improve attendee satisfaction rate by 50% at the local Walk events, measured by contracted pre- and post-surveys of Walk registrations in 2024 and 2025.
Big Idea

The Big Idea for this campaign is about bringing together people of different ages to improve the quality of their local Walk to End Alzheimer’s events and raise even more funds to advance Alzheimer’s disease and dementia research.

Slogan & Hashtag

The motto that captures the essence of the big idea is “All Walks of Life.” This slogan is a play on words that conveys volunteers of different ages uniting for a worthy cause and making small-town Walk to End Alzheimer’s events more inclusive to everyone. The complimentary hashtag for this campaign is #AllWalksOfLife.

Big Idea Strategy

Volunteering for the Alzheimer’s Association has mass appeal. Along with providing helpful resources to families affected by dementia, the national organization funds scientific studies aimed at discovering a cure for the disease. The Association also has several regional chapters, such as the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter, which offer a unique opportunity for 1) college students to gain community service hours, 2) employers to host teambuilding exercises as well as recruit and retain top talent, and 3) retirees to help other senior citizens like them. Thus, “All Walks of Life” is a storytelling campaign that focuses on volunteer experiences from different perspectives and the impact that volunteer work has on families affected by Alzheimer’s disease.

Communications featuring student, company, and elderly volunteers will be motivating and inspiring. These stories will emphasize the benefits of volunteering for such a meaningful cause. Additionally, communications that feature individuals affected by Alzheimer’s disease will be emotional and uplifting. These stories will display the impact that Walk to End Alzheimer’s events can have on the entire support network: dementia patients, their families, and their caregivers.
The “All Walks of Life” campaign will position the Alzheimer’s Association as an important charity and highlight the educational, professional, and personal perks of volunteering for people of different ages. This campaign will also position the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter as a regional leader, encouraging other Association chapters to adapt recruitment strategies to address more than one age group. “All Walks of Life” stories will be shared through paid, owned, and earned media.

In addition to the media angle, this campaign involves Association staff and volunteers in Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd directly contacting leaders from colleges, businesses, and community centers to achieve volunteer commitments. The Alzheimer’s Association will share clearly defined roles for volunteers, scheduling expectations per age group, advance notice of upcoming Walk events, and regular updates leading up to the fundraisers. In other words, Walk to End Alzheimer’s organizers will present volunteering as easy and mutually beneficial for all.

Strategic Communication Theory

The “All Walks of Life” campaign strategy was informed by the Source-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) Model. This framework was developed by David Berlo (p. 2), breaking down the communication process into four parts. Berlo’s model claims that the source and receivers must be aligned for effective communication to occur. In short, this framework also acknowledges the importance of considering a source—as in, who or what is portraying the message—and their characteristics. The core communicator qualities that determine whether a source may be effective at persuading publics to do something include authority, credibility, and social attractiveness.

In this campaign, each age group’s messaging exemplifies credibility and social attractiveness. College students are more likely to be persuaded to volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association if they see promotions with imagery of other college students. The same goes for business leaders and older adults. In this case, all three publics are persuaded to join because of the similarity they witness between themselves and what the promotions promise.

Additionally, business leaders can persuade their employees to participate in volunteer events due to their authority. A business leader has the power to prove their dedication to the effort by establishing a service day perk for employees. Finally, Alzheimer’s disease patients and their families offer a high level of credibility when persuading people to volunteer for Association fundraising events. Those personally affected by the disease are trustworthy when sharing the impact that the disease has had on their quality of life because they have lived experience to support their claims.

**Visual Representation**

The “All Walks of Life” campaign will feature the following icons of a graduation cap, briefcase, and reading glasses from Font Awesome, which are free to use:

![Icons](image)

These icons will be used in graphics and other messages to address each of the main age groups collectively or individually: college students, business leaders, and senior citizens, respectively.
This campaign will also feature visuals that include photos and videos of the following:

- Volunteers from local schools, businesses, and senior community centers wearing branded “All Walks of Life” apparel and assisting with Walk to End Alzheimer’s activities.
- Dementia patients and their families benefitting from high-quality Walk to End Alzheimer’s events and research donations.
Publics

The “All Walks of Life” communications plan includes three publics: college students, business leaders, and retirees. It is crucial that the Association builds relationships with each of these publics in Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd, MN. For these groups to be persuaded effectively, the Association must also frame the benefits of volunteering based on each public’s needs. Together, this strategy will increase volunteer recruitment, improve the quality of small-town Walk to End Alzheimer’s events, and boost donations for vital scientific research studies.

College Students

This public includes undergraduate students at universities or community and technical colleges who are enrolled in health care- and human service-related degrees and must fulfill community service requirements to graduate from their program. This public also includes students who are involved in or lead campus clubs, especially organizations that focus on volunteering in the community and the healthcare industry.

Objectives Accomplished by Key Public

College students consume a high volume of social media content, and some can have especially large followings. They also have the energy to make local Walk events more exciting for younger audiences, care about the cause, and get involved. Thus, college students will have a direct impact on raising awareness of the Association’s volunteer opportunities (Objective 1) and improving attendee satisfaction at Walk to End Alzheimer’s fundraising events (Objective 3).

Demographics & Psychographics

The average American college student between the ages of 18–24 is female (58%). Most traditional university students enroll in four-year degree programs to achieve a full-time career later. On the other hand, many community and technical college students enroll in one- to two-year programs to enter the workforce sooner while also working part time to afford their education.
Students who are enrolled in health care- and human service-related degrees are driven to make the world a better place. They are not afraid to get their hands dirty if it means helping others in need. Additionally, student club members and leaders are driven to connect with their peers on a deeper level. They want to apply what they learn in the classroom to the real world and are constantly seeking new ways to enter the workforce as a top candidate.

*Relationship with Organization or Issue*

Some college students may have an immediate connection to the Alzheimer’s Association. They may have studied brain disorders, participated in previous Walk events, or been personally affected by dementia. Other students’ main relationship with the Association may be due to the volunteer opportunities.

*Opinion Leaders*

College students value advice and feedback from other current students who are farther along in the same academic program or students who have successfully graduated. Alumni testimonials are especially persuasive to prospective and first-year students who want extra reassurance when making decisions about their classes and extracurriculars.

*Motivating Self-Interests*

College students who are interested in health care and human services want to complete their degree in a timely manner, so they can enter the workforce and help people in the real world. Therefore, students seek volunteer opportunities to satisfy community service requirements for graduation and to impress future employers.

*Viable Communication Channels*

The top communication channels for reaching local college students include:

- Website and social media content (i.e., YouTube, Instagram)
- Personalized, in-person communications
Business Leaders

This public includes formal business owners, human resources staff, and other managers at local companies. This public also includes those who hold informal leadership roles on their teams. The “All Walks of Life” campaign prioritizes health care- and human service-related workplaces, such as hospitals and clinics. Other general businesses will be considered as well.

Objectives Accomplished by Key Public

Business leaders have the authority to demonstrate their commitment to business goals and mission statements through their actions. Oftentimes, companies also have the power to band together and leverage networks to raise large donations that are needed to advance breakthrough dementia research. Thus, business leaders will have a direct impact on establishing a pipeline of corporate volunteers through required team service days (Objective 2) and improving attendee satisfaction at Walk to End Alzheimer’s fundraising events (Objective 3).

Demographics & Psychographics

Business leaders are the decision makers at their organizations, and they have influence over discretionary activities and team building. They are generally well-established in their careers, making them between the ages of 35–55. Most managers, directors, and vice presidents are heavily involved in their communities to maintain a positive image for their team and the overall company. Many of these leaders also balance personal lives with significant others and often children. Within Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd, predominantly men lead or own businesses and ventures.

Employers in health care- and human service-related workplaces are driven to serve others. They find helping people in need to be a very rewarding experience. Additionally, employees in these industries join businesses that make them feel like they are part of something that is much bigger than themselves alone. Ultimately, they want to feel a greater sense of purpose in life.
**Relationship with Organization or Issue**

Some business leaders and employees may have an immediate connection to the Alzheimer’s Association. They may have donated to the cause, participated in previous Walk events, or been personally affected by dementia. Other leaders’ main relationship with the Association may be due to the corporate volunteer opportunities.

**Opinion Leaders**

Business leaders value support from other leaders in the community or similar companies who share a mission of contributing to philanthropy and being authentic to organizational goals. Employees seeking employers that understand how volunteering can positively impact the workplace are especially persuasive to prospective hires. In other words, existing employees who believe the job culture is healthy and authentic reinforce company recruitment and retention rates.

**Motivating Self-Interests**

Business leaders who are invested in health care and human services want to build their credibility in the field, so they can continue to serve the right customers and thrive as a business. Therefore, employers seek volunteer opportunities to boost their organization’s reputation.

**Viable Communication Channels**

The top communication channels for reaching local company leaders include:

- Chamber of Commerce materials, print and digital
- Networking social media (i.e., Facebook, LinkedIn)
- In-person networking events
Retirees

This public includes individuals who have retired from their previous career. They no longer have required work obligations because of their age or decision to leave the workplace.

Objectives Accomplished by Key Public

Some retirees have the financial stability to donate large contributions to worthy causes like the Alzheimer’s Association. Walk events that have received significant donations oftentimes have much more energy during the event because attendees feel like they are part of something meaningful. They also have the freedom to spend their time however they wish, unlike younger generations who must work to make a living. Thus, retirees will have a direct impact on improving attendee satisfaction at Walk to End Alzheimer’s fundraising events (Objective 3).

Demographics & Psychographics

Retirees have the most lived experience, and they can offer a variety of perspectives on current situations. The average retired person is aged 60 and up and is generally someone who has worked a long time. Some senior citizen volunteers may have a greater ability to contribute large amounts of money and time to certain causes. It is also worth noting that some older retirees may lack the physical energy—and sometimes cognitive ability—to act with urgency and pivot ideas when supporting events, compared to younger generations. However, retirees may be the most qualified to give input on the accessibility of fundraisers and ensure the events are truly inclusive.

Retired people are driven to improve the next generation’s quality of life. They are willing to share words of wisdom and reflect on the past to enhance the future. Most retirees find it satisfying to give back to others. Additionally, retired people want to join an effort addressing health issues that directly affect their age group. In other words, they want to personally enjoy a high quality of life and provide that for others as well.
Relationship with Organization or Issue

Some retirees may have an immediate connection to the Alzheimer’s Association. They may have donated to the cause or participated in previous Walk events. Retired people may have also been personally affected by dementia. Perhaps dementia runs in their family, or they have peers who were diagnosed later in life, or they were even caregivers when they were young.

Opinion Leaders

Retirees value advice from medical professionals, their family members, and other senior citizens who are their friends. Retired people who want to be active throughout their retirement can be especially persuasive to more inactive retirees.

Motivating Self-Interests

Retirees who are invested in their health and others’ well-being want to leverage the freedom they now have to do good deeds as well as their financial resources to help worthy causes gain momentum. In other words, people who are retired seek the opportunity to give back and to enjoy life after working for so long.

Viable Communication Channels

The top communication channels for reaching retirees include:

- In-person community events
- Print materials and mailers (e.g., newspapers, flyers, posters)
- Social media (e.g., Facebook)
Messages, Strategies & Tactics for College Students

Messages

Primary

“Be part of the solution. Put your healthcare degree into action by volunteering at your local Walk to End Alzheimer’s event.”

Secondary

• “We need U to help end dementia. Volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association.”
• “Calling all aspiring healthcare heroes: show the world what compassionate care looks like as an Alzheimer’s Association volunteer.”
• “Use your influence to spread the word about Alzheimer’s disease and how others can get involved.”
• “Gain valuable hands-on experience while giving back at your local Walk to End Alzheimer’s event.”
• “Add meaning to your resume. Volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association and stand out from the crowd.”
• “As an Alzheimer’s Association volunteer, you will make memories in honor of those who no longer can.”
• “Tap into your knack for planning events and bring your fresh ideas to your local Walk to End Alzheimer’s event.”
• “Jump-start your career in health care and make a difference in dementia research.”
• “Help us discover a world free of dementia and build a brighter future for our seniors. Volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association.”
• “Apply what you learn in the classroom to the real world. Volunteer with us to join the fight against Alzheimer’s disease.”
Strategies & Tactics

Strategy 1: Going Beyond the Books

This first strategy aims to leverage college students’ healthcare knowledge from class and human services involvement in extracurricular activities.

Tactics for Strategy 1

- Develop visually engaging website content and social media posts that highlight how students can make a difference in dementia care. Using blogs and Instagram, this targeted campaign will showcase college student volunteers from healthcare programs who are engaging with real-world Alzheimer’s disease patients and their families.
- Collaborate with healthcare-related clubs and student organizations to host informational sessions about dementia, caregiving techniques, and the impact of volunteering. These workshops will allow invited guest speakers—from healthcare professors to Alzheimer’s Association professionals—to share what they know and inspire students to get involved.
- Tailor existing Alzheimer’s Association training programs to students who are enrolled in healthcare degree programs. These specialized training sessions will provide hands-on activities and cover topics such as communicating with Alzheimer’s patients and building empathy for those affected by dementia. These sessions can provide a hands-on extra credit opportunity for students that equally benefits their personal and professional development.
- Partner with campus health centers to promote volunteer experiences available with the Alzheimer’s Association. By creating various print materials like posters and flyers to be displayed in waiting areas and distributed during health-related events, students will naturally inquire about volunteering as part of their practical experience.
- Pair college students who are interested in dementia care with experienced volunteers within the Alzheimer’s Association network. This volunteer mentorship program will allow students to receive personalized guidance on how to navigate caregiving situations.
**Strategy 2: Leading by Example**

This second strategy aims to harness college professors’ community ties and their commitment to health care philanthropy.

**Tactics for Strategy 2**

- Identify professors who have strong connections to the local community and a passion for charity. By recruiting professors as campus philanthropy ambassadors, students in their classes will benefit from hearing more about volunteer opportunities—including for the Alzheimer’s Association.

- Collaborate with professors to arrange class-wide volunteering activities for the local Walk to End Alzheimer’s event. These group volunteer events will highlight the collective impact of faculty-student partnership in supporting Alzheimer’s disease research.

- Work with faculty to design service-learning projects that not only align with course objectives and graduation requirements, but also provide students with hands-on experience in community outreach and dementia research. By integrating the Walk to End Alzheimer’s event into course curricula, students will earn academic credit while volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association.

- Capture professors mentoring students who are interested in dementia advocacy and volunteerism by sponsoring collaborative faculty-student projects. Blog stories that feature students working alongside their professors on Alzheimer’s-related research initiatives will further reinforce faculty expertise and their role in supporting students.

- Acknowledge professors’ contributions to Alzheimer’s Association volunteerism through a sponsored annual award. This award will showcase faculty members who actively support student involvement in the community and who foster social responsibility among future healthcare professionals.
**Strategy 3: Making Service Simple**

This third strategy aims to promote how students can meet community service requirements needed for graduation.

**Tactics for Strategy 3**

- Establish a dedicated section on the colleges’ website or student portals for hosting information about upcoming volunteer opportunities, including those with the Alzheimer’s Association. This hub of volunteer details will streamline the process for students when selecting an organization to work with or exploring local volunteer resources.

- Participate in campus-wide volunteer fairs where students can learn about different service-learning experiences, such as the next Walk to End Alzheimer’s event. Alzheimer’s Association representatives will engage with students, answer their questions, and recruit new volunteers all at the same time.

- Provide flexible volunteering options for students who serve on the Walk to End Alzheimer’s event planning committee. By offering weekend, evening, and virtual activities, the Alzheimer’s Association effectively recognizes that students have busy schedules and varying commitments that compete for their time to volunteer.

- Advocate for volunteerism to be incorporated into students’ academic plans and provide resources to advisors who discuss volunteer opportunities with students during advising sessions. These advising-related resources will help students identify local activities that align with their personal interests and career goals.

- Emphasize the personal and professional benefits of volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association by developing social media graphics and website content. These Instagram posts and blog stories will showcase testimonials from previous student volunteers, highlighting how their experiences enriched their academic journey.
Messages, Strategies & Tactics for Business Leaders

Messages

Primary

“Lead inside and outside the office. Promote your company ties to the community as a Walk to End Alzheimer’s volunteer.”

Secondary

• “Drive scientific innovation and find a cure for Alzheimer’s disease through meaningful team building.”
• “Leave a legacy that transcends profits by volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association.”
• “Live your company values. Unite for a cause that matters. Become an Alzheimer’s Association volunteer.”
• “As a Walk to End Alzheimer’s volunteer, you will build your brand and boost employee morale.”
• “Integrate your team right into the community that needs them most. Volunteer at your local Walk to End Alzheimer’s event.”
• “Emerge as a community partner and inspire others to join the fight against Alzheimer’s disease.”
• “Show your team what work-life balance with a purpose looks like. Volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association.”
• “Create a workplace where compassion thrives. Volunteer for your local Walk to End Alzheimer’s event—during or outside your working hours.”
• “Foster a positive company culture with the Alzheimer’s Association. Lead by example as a volunteer.”
• “Attract top talent and retain your best employees. Demonstrate your commitment to social responsibility as an Alzheimer’s Association volunteer.”
Strategies & Tactics

Strategy 1: Making Work Worthwhile

This first strategy aims to foster a positive workplace culture with volunteerism.

Tactics for Strategy 1

- Launch leadership-targeted newsletters and email announcements to promote volunteer opportunities with the Alzheimer’s Association. This internal communication campaign will highlight the benefits of volunteering, such as team bonding, personal fulfillment, and making a positive impact in the community.

- Establish employee-led volunteer committees that organize and coordinate company-wide participation with the Alzheimer’s Association. These corporate committees will allow employees across departments to collaborate with one another, nurturing camaraderie.

- Implement internal volunteering competitions and celebrate teams that volunteered a lot of their time to advance Alzheimer’s Association initiatives. Gamifying large-scale participation and recognizing employees’ accomplishments through annual employee spotlights on LinkedIn and Facebook will reinforce companies’ commitment to community engagement and dementia research.

- Introduce volunteer matching programs where companies match employee volunteer hours with monetary donations or grants to the Alzheimer’s Association. These volunteer matching programs will encourage employees to track their community service hours and maximize organizations’ impact through teamwork.

- Encourage businesses to offer paid time off or flexible scheduling options for employees who want to participate in volunteer activities during work hours. Providing volunteer time off (VTO) and communicating VTO policies clearly will demonstrate companies’ support for employees to pursue philanthropic endeavors.
Strategy 2: Prescribing Purpose

This second strategy aims to leverage healthcare organizations’ credibility through volunteerism.

Tactics for Strategy 2

- Produce educational content on Alzheimer’s disease, caregiving, and other dementia-related topics. Sharing these publications on company websites and LinkedIn will position organizations as thought leaders in healthcare charity.

- Identify leaders and staff to become formal dementia educators through the Alzheimer’s Association. These internal education experts will be able to help companies host community outreach events—from educational seminars to health fairs to volunteer support workshops—in partnership with the Association. These events will raise awareness about Alzheimer’s disease and promote volunteerism among employees.

- Capture testimonials from employees who have volunteered with the Alzheimer’s Association, and share these perspectives on company websites, Facebook, and LinkedIn as well as during large-scale organizational meetings. This testimonial campaign will highlight the impact of their volunteer work, thereby inspiring others to get involved.

- Sponsor local Walk to End Alzheimer’s events by allocating corporate donations or grants to support the Association. These corporate sponsorships and donations will reinforce organizations’ commitment to improving the quality of life for those affected by dementia.

- Have companies become active members in local Chamber of Commerce networks to forge strategic partnerships between healthcare organizations and the surrounding community. This membership will allow businesses volunteering for the Alzheimer’s Association to share achievements during regular meetings and encourage other reputable organizations in health care to join the fight against dementia.
**Strategy 3: Future-Proofing Health Care**

This third strategy aims to help healthcare organizations to remain relevant in today’s competitive business landscape.

**Tactics for Strategy 3**

- Highlight organizations’ volunteerism initiatives, including partnerships with the Alzheimer’s Association, in employee recruitment materials, career websites, and job postings. By incorporating companies’ commitment to social responsibility, these employer branding efforts will help attract top talent.

- Pursue industry recognition and awards for community engagement efforts, such as volunteer work with the Alzheimer’s Association. Showcasing accolades and other achievements in press releases and LinkedIn company profiles will enhance organizations’ reputation and credibility.

- Demonstrate companies’ dedication to volunteerism from the top down by encouraging executive leaders to actively participate in local Walk to End Alzheimer’s events. Leaders will not only serve as role models for other employees, but also help Alzheimer’s Association fundraisers gain more momentum due to their impressive networks.

- Leverage volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association as a platform for networking and collaboration with other healthcare organizations, industry leaders, and community stakeholders. By participating in joint volunteer efforts or corporate challenges for local Walk to End Alzheimer’s fundraising events, business leaders will promote cross-company engagement and foster strategic relationships.

- Establish feedback mechanisms to gather input from employees on volunteer programs and initiatives with the Alzheimer's Association. This continuous improvement initiative will give organizations the chance to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of volunteer efforts and to ensure future offerings remain relevant.
Messages, Strategies & Tactics for Retirees

Messages

Primary

“Ready to enrich your retirement? Help create a world where no one faces dementia alone by volunteering for your local Walk to End Alzheimer’s event.”

Secondary

• “Let’s pave the way for a world without Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.”
• “Embrace life with purpose and compassion as a volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association.”
• “Volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association to show those facing memory loss that they are never alone on this journey.”
• “Ready to make your golden years even brighter? Illuminate a better future as a Walk to End Alzheimer’s volunteer.”
• “Join a family of volunteers who are dedicated to supporting those affected by Alzheimer’s disease.”
• “Give back to your community and help families in need. Share your wisdom as an Alzheimer’s Association volunteer.”
• “Put your skills and knowledge to work as a volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association.”
• “Age is just a number when it comes to making a difference. Volunteer with the Alzheimer’s Association today.”
• “Discover the power of connection during retirement. As an Alzheimer’s Association volunteer, you will forge meaningful relationships while making a positive impact on others.”
• “Join the Alzheimer’s Association in making a difference that lasts a lifetime. Become a volunteer to be part of a community dedicated to improving the lives of seniors like you.”
Strategies & Tactics

Strategy 1: Redefining Retirement

This first strategy aims to enhance retirees’ quality of life through volunteering.

Tactics for Strategy 1

- Sponsor community bingo, Scrabble, and other game activities to highlight the various health benefits of volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association. These event sponsorships will allow Association staff to share research findings and testimonials that demonstrate how volunteering can reduce stress, increase social connections, and improve overall well-being in retirees and senior citizens.

- Partner with community senior clubs to develop and amplify stories that illustrate how volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association can provide retirees a sense of fulfillment during retirement. This personalized outreach using print mailers—to be distributed at retiree community center events—will resonate with senior citizens’ different interests, hobbies, and life experiences.

- Capture and share testimonials from retirees who have experienced the positive impact of volunteering with the Alzheimer's Association firsthand. Featuring their stories in print marketing materials and newsletters will encourage other senior citizens to get involved and experience the benefits of volunteering.

- Host volunteer appreciation events to celebrate the contributions of retirees and senior volunteers to the Alzheimer’s Association. These annual recognition events will show appreciation for older volunteers’ dedication and commitment through heartfelt gestures, such as awards and personalized thank-you notes.

- Organize social outings for retirees to connect with one another and build meaningful relationships through volunteerism. These events will foster a sense of belonging within the older volunteer community.
Strategy 2: Making a Mark

This second strategy aims to help senior citizens build a legacy and impact through volunteerism.

Tactics for Strategy 2

• Frame volunteering with the Alzheimer's Association as an opportunity for retirees and senior citizens to leave a meaningful legacy and make a lasting impact on future generations. Using print mailers with this messaging will emphasize the importance of preserving memories, advocating for dementia awareness, and supporting families affected by Alzheimer's disease.

• Encourage senior volunteers to share their wisdom, experiences, and skills with younger generations through sponsored intergenerational activities. These engagement opportunities will highlight how volunteering with the Alzheimer's Association enables them to pass on knowledge and enrich the lives of others.

• Capture compelling stories and testimonials that illustrate the intergenerational connections and impact of volunteering with the Alzheimer's Association. These multimedia narratives will amplify the voices of older volunteers who are making a difference in the lives of those affected by dementia.

• Recruit senior volunteers who have been personally affected by dementia to participate as guest speakers and advocates for Alzheimer’s disease prevention. These educational outreach opportunities will allow retirees to raise awareness about dementia and promote volunteerism among younger generations.

• Encourage retirees and senior volunteers to join family-oriented activities in honor of their local Walk to End Alzheimer’s event. These shared bonding experiences will encourage senior citizens to invite their children, grandchildren, or extended family members to foster a sense of unity and purpose across generations.
**Strategy 3: Inspiring through Retiring**

This third strategy aims to leverage retired individuals’ freedom and financial stability.

**Tactics for Strategy 3**

- Offer retirees and senior citizens flexible volunteering options that accommodate their ability, preferences, and availability during retirement. Providing opportunities for short-term projects, virtual volunteering, or seasonal initiatives will especially align with many retirees’ lifestyles and schedules.

- Create an incentives program for volunteers who reach significant community service hour milestones and make other notable contributions to the Alzheimer’s Association. These incentives will drive retirees to demonstrate exceptional dedication to the cause, spreading awareness of dementia and establishing benchmarks for volunteer recognition awards.

- Develop print and digital information for retirees and senior volunteers who want to contribute financially to the Alzheimer's Association, either through donations, fundraising efforts, or planned giving initiatives. Demystifying tax benefits, charitable giving options, and estate planning strategies will maximize retirees' philanthropic impact.

- Organize volunteer travel experiences or service trips for retirees and senior citizens who are eager to explore new destinations and make a difference in communities hosting Walk to End Alzheimer’s events. Offering curated travel packages will combine volunteering with leisure activities, cultural experiences, and meaningful connections with locals.

- Collaborate with retirement communities, senior centers, and assisted living facilities near local Walk to End Alzheimer’s events to promote volunteering opportunities to residents. These senior community partnerships will help guide volunteer recruitment, outreach, and engagement initiatives that are tailored to the needs and interests of retirees living in these communities.
Implementation

Calendar & Budget

The Minnesota-North Dakota chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association heavily relies on time and materials donated by event volunteers and administrative volunteers serving on leadership committees. Otherwise, Association staff complete work that volunteers cannot. The Association also has a significant budget for promotions. On average, the organization uses about $75 million of donations for fundraising efforts across all 78 chapters in the U.S.—or roughly $96,000 per regional chapter.

Most of the strategies outlined in the following calendar and budget must be completed by Alzheimer’s Association staff and volunteers to lower expenses. Additionally, this calendar and budget emphasize how committed the Association staff and volunteers are to the overall cause. The following are personnel, time, and material needs to complete “All Walks of Life” objectives.

Personnel & Time

The Minnesota-North Dakota chapter has limited paid staff who have been hired to manage overall volunteer recruitment as well as coordinate Walk to End Alzheimer’s fundraising events. These staff members provide guidance to volunteers when completing related tasks. Alzheimer’s Association volunteers do not get paid for all the work they do for the organization. Therefore, they must be willing to donate 690 hours of their time and talents to the Association.

Although the Alzheimer’s Association currently does an excellent job at building general brand awareness and creating a variety of marketing and communications messages, the organization can improve its volunteer recruitment strategy by bringing together several perspectives and making its Walk to End Alzheimer’s event even more inclusive to everyone.
Volunteers from different age groups are needed to participate in a variety of content throughout the “All Walks of Life” campaign. Thus, the Alzheimer’s Association will need current and/or former volunteers—along with families affected by dementia—to share their experiences with the Association. New volunteers from local colleges, businesses, and retiree communities must also donate their time to be interviewed, photographed, and filmed for campaign collateral.

Alzheimer’s Association staff who have experience in storytelling, photography, and videography will help develop and edit multimedia content. Staff who have experience working with websites, social media, and print media will share the content with the right audiences.

Materials

The “All Walks of Life” campaign combines marketing and communications tactics in print and digital formats. This multimedia content will require word processing software, printing services, as well as photo and video cameras, microphones, and editing equipment. High-quality images and video footage will be repurposed for different channels and formats when possible.

Using previously obtained donations, the Alzheimer’s Association will pay for printed promotional materials and boosted digital content. These materials are estimated to cost $850. The Association will also pay for Chamber of Commerce memberships in Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd, costing an estimated $11,500 annually. Finally, a unique travel opportunity that visits all three Walk sites is estimated to cost $5,000. The “All Walks of Life” campaign will cost the Alzheimer’s Association a total of $17,350.
## RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE

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### Key Points: Coding/Elements

#### Strategy: Going Beyond the Basics
Leverage college students’ healthcare knowledge from class and human services involvement in extracurricular activities.

- Develop website content (blogs) and social media posts (Instagram) highlighting how student volunteers can make a difference in dementia care.

  - **Tactics:**
    - Collaborate with healthcare-related clubs and student organizations to host info sessions about dementia care.
    - Table during Alzheimer’s Association trunk shows.
    - Partner with campus health centers to promote Association volunteer opportunities with print materials (posters and flyers).
    - Ask college students who are interested in dementia care with experienced Alzheimer’s Association volunteers.
    - Sponsor collaborative faculty/student projects to develop advocacy and volunteerism with local clinics.

#### Strategy: Making Service Simple
Promote how students can meet community service requirements for graduation.

- Organize an annual community service fair.

  - **Tactics:**
    - Participate in college-wide volunteer fair to share service-learning experiences available with the Association.
    - Promote rounds of participants into Alzheimer’s Association volunteer opportunities.
    - Develop website content (blogs) and social media posts (Instagram) emphasizing the benefits of volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association.
# RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE

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**Key Calculations:**
- **Volunteers:**
- **Participating Volunteers:**
- **Annual Participation:**
- **Volunteer Retention:**

**Strategies:**
1. **Reaching Out:**
   - Foster positive workplace culture with volunteering.
   - Leverage the Alzheimer’s Association’s credibility through partnerships.
   - Highlight community partnerships and initiatives.

**Tactics:**
- Launch leadership-targeted newsletters and email announcements to promote volunteer opportunities with the Alzheimer’s Association.
- Establish employee-led volunteer committees to organize and coordinate company-wide volunteer opportunities.
- Implement internal volunteer competitions and celebrate teams that volunteered a set number of hours to advance volunteer engagement.
- Introduce volunteer matching programs where companies match employee volunteer hours with monetary donations or grants to the Association.
- Encourage businesses to offer paid volunteer time off (VTO) for employees who want to participate in volunteer activities during work hours.
- Produce and share educational content on Alzheimer’s disease and dementia on company websites and LinkedIn.
- Identify leaders and staff to become formal dementia educators through the Alzheimer’s Association program.
- Sponsor local Walk to End Alzheimer’s events by obtaining corporate donations or grants to support the Association.
- Have companies become active members in local Chamber of Commerce networks and leverage community partnerships.

**Future-Proofing Health Case:**
- Highlight partnerships’ volunteerism initiatives and collaborative efforts with the Alzheimer’s Association in recruitment flyers and online websites and job postings.
- Demonstrate companies’ dedication to volunteerism from the top down by encouraging executive teams to actively participate in local fundraiser events.
- Leverage volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association as a platform for networking and collaboration with other healthcare stakeholders.
- Establish feedback mechanisms to gather input from employees on volunteer programs and initiatives with the Alzheimer’s Association.
### Recruiting Volunteers from All Walks of Life

#### Key Tactics

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#### Key Actions

- **Redefining Retirement: Enhance retiree quality of life through volunteering.**
  - Sponsor community�ng, Scrabble, and other game activities to highlight the various health benefits of volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association.
  - Partner with community senior clubs to develop print materials (postcards) with stories that show how volunteering can make retirement more fulfilling.
  - Capture testimonials from retirees who have experienced the positive impact of Association volunteering, and share the stories in print, digital, and newsletters.
  - Host volunteer appreciation events to celebrate the contributions of retirees and senior volunteers to the Alzheimer’s Association, and provide thank you notes.
  - Organize social outings for retirees to connect with one another and build meaningful relationships through volunteering.

- **Making a Mark: Help senior citizens build a legacy and impact through volunteerism.**
  - Mail print materials (postcards) that frame volunteering with the Association as a chance to preserve memories, raise dementia awareness, and help others.
  - Encourage senior volunteers to share their wisdom, experience, and skills with younger generations through sponsored intergenerational activities.
  - Capture compelling stories that illustrate the intergenerational connections from volunteering with the Association, and share in newsletters and Facebook.
  - Recruit senior volunteers who have been personally affected by dementia to participate as guest speakers and advocates for Alzheimer’s disease prevention.
  - Encourage retirees and senior volunteers to join family-oriented activities in honor of their local Walk to End Alzheimer’s Fundraising event.

- **Inspiring through Retiring: Leverage retired individuals’ freedom and financial stability.**
  - Offer retirees and senior citizens short-term projects, virtual volunteering options, and seasonal initiatives to accommodate their lifestyles and schedules.
  - Develop print (brochures) and digital (Facebook posts, website) info for retirees who want to contribute financially to the Alzheimer’s Association.
  - Organize volunteer travel experiences or service trips for senior citizens who are eager to explore new destinations and volunteer for multiple Walk events.
  - Collaborate with retirement communities, senior centers, and assisted living facilities near local Walk to End Alzheimer’s events to promote volunteer options.
## RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE

### Key Public: College Students

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### Key Public: Business Leaders

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Evaluation

Overall Goal

The overall goal of the “All Walks of Life” campaign is to recruit volunteers of all ages, so the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter can host high-quality events and raise money to fund breakthrough dementia research.

Criteria & Tool

Achieving this goal will result in an increase in consistent volunteer participation that supports annual Walk to End Alzheimer’s fundraising events in Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd, all located in Minnesota. To measure the success of this goal, Alzheimer’s Association staff from the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter will tally the number of volunteers participating in the 2024 and 2025 Walk events, then compare the difference to determine growth and stability. Association staff will also compile and analyze testimonials acquired from web and social media content featuring college students, business leaders, and retirees to determine public opinion.

Additionally, achieving this goal will result in an increase in donations at the Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd Walk to End Alzheimer’s events. To measure the success of this goal, Alzheimer’s Association staff from the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter will tally the number of donations contributed to the 2024 and 2025 Walk fundraisers, then compare the difference to determine growth and stability.
Objective 1
Within one year, raise awareness of the Association’s Minnesota-North Dakota chapter volunteer opportunities amongst college students, business leaders, and retirees to 80%.

Criteria & Tool
Achieving this objective will result in greater brand awareness of Alzheimer’s Association volunteer options in Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd. To measure the success of this objective, Alzheimer’s Association staff from the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter will create an in-house online survey, distribute its link on print and digital marketing materials throughout the campaign, and analyze results from each of the local communities at the beginning and end of the Walk to End Alzheimer’s event season. Association staff will then compare the pre- and post-survey results to determine growth in volunteering awareness.

Objective 2
Within two years, create a pipeline of volunteers from local colleges, businesses, and community centers that will allow the Alzheimer’s Association to recruit at least 50 volunteers for all three Walk events combined.

Criteria & Tool
Achieving this objective will result in higher quality Walk to End Alzheimer’s events in Willmar, Alexandria, and Brainerd. To measure the success of this objective, Alzheimer’s Association staff from the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter will tally the number of volunteers participating in the 2024 and 2025 Walk events, then compare the difference to determine growth and stability. Association staff will also analyze digital analytics on web and social media content targeting college students, business leaders, and retirees to determine audience engagement.
Objective 3
Within two years, improve attendee satisfaction rate by 50% at the local Walk to End Alzheimer’s events.

Criteria & Tool
Achieving this objective will result in an increase of donations needed for funding breakthrough dementia research studies. To measure the success of this objective, Alzheimer’s Association staff from the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter will create an in-house online survey, distribute its link on print and digital marketing materials throughout the campaign, and analyze results from each of the local communities at the beginning and end of the Walk to End Alzheimer’s event season. Association staff will then compare the pre- and post-survey results to determine growth in attendee satisfaction. Association staff will also analyze comments on social media content promoting the Walk fundraising events to determine public opinion.
Disclosure

This master’s thesis used ChatGPT for brainstorming purposes within the Messages, Strategies, and Tactics sections. Although ChatGPT contributed suggestions during the project development phase, the final content, analysis, and conclusions presented in this thesis reflect independent research and critical thinking by Hailey Seipel. This disclosure ensures transparency regarding the use of an advanced AI language tool to enhance Hailey’s overall creativity. This disclosure also affirms the integrity and originality of the scholarly work presented herein.
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Appendix A: Secondary Research

External Environment

Economic, political, and social environment within which the organization operates

The COVID-19 pandemic immediately had consequences on paid labor around the world. Numerous positions across sectors were either consolidated or eliminated. Physical distancing policies forced businesses and organizations alike to reimagine everything from products and services to workforce and facilities. Years later, the current jobs crisis is a result of the widening gap between the skills that today’s workers can offer and the skills that employers need.\(^2\)

The pandemic had similar implications on volunteer labor as well. COVID-19-related budget cuts and layoffs forced nonprofit organizations to depend on volunteers more than ever to continue operating. Thus, the pandemic worsened the gap between consumer demand for nonprofit services and nonprofit organizations’ ability to fundraise for philanthropic causes.\(^3\)

Additionally, post-COVID-19 nonprofit organizations face a new donation landscape due to changing consumer financial behavior. Individuals who are adjusting to income changes, plus higher costs of living due to inflation, are less likely to donate to organizations—even to those that they supported previously.\(^4\) Charitable giving across different donor audiences is also falling, especially younger generations who favor donating online to carrying cash or using checks.

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Finally, many people are not as eager to volunteer in person because they do not want to risk getting sick, especially older adults whose immune systems have been compromised with age.\(^5\) There is a high demand for online volunteer opportunities among young adults and middle-aged adults due to the pandemic, advancing technology, and greater work-life balance support.\(^6\)

**Pressures on the organization**

The Alzheimer’s Association is a nonprofit organization that exists to discover a cure for Alzheimer’s disease and all other dementia.\(^7\) Its mission is a strong driver for both new and existing staff. However, despite mass moral support from its employees and leaders, the Alzheimer’s Association heavily relies on volunteers to properly function in several areas.

**Future direction of the problem**

Without enough volunteers, fundraising events will be ill-attended, and the Alzheimer’s Association will not be able to cover the costs for advancing dementia research. Poor user experience at fundraising events may urge large sponsors and donors to end their financial and moral support for the Alzheimer’s Association. However, if long-term fundraising efforts remain difficult, then the organization may be in danger of shutting down and failing to fulfill its mission.

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\(^5\) Beaty, T., & Gamboa, G. (2023, April 17). *Volunteering have been declining for decades but the pandemic and economic struggles made it a lot worse: ‘This is a wake-up call.’* Fortune. [https://fortune.com/2023/04/17/nonprofit-volunteering-declining-covid-pandemic-economic-hardship/](https://fortune.com/2023/04/17/nonprofit-volunteering-declining-covid-pandemic-economic-hardship/)


\(^7\) Alzheimer’s Association. (2024a). *About.* Alzheimer’s Association. [https://www.alz.org/about](https://www.alz.org/about)
Industry

Trends in nonprofit organizations

Volunteers primarily run nonprofit organizations. Most nonprofits have limited budgets; therefore, these organizations direct as much money as possible toward charitable causes rather than staffing. Nonprofit organizations bridge the gap in employees with unpaid volunteers and commonly rely on volunteers to successfully operate.

Nonprofit volunteers fulfill many functional roles, from serving as members on decision-making boards or committees to answering phones. Unpaid volunteer labor also allows nonprofit organizations to improve fundraising efforts by developing strong donor relationships and to demonstrate community engagement by enhancing an organization’s overall brand and image.

The Alzheimer’s Association counts on volunteers to assist with running annual fundraising events like Walk to End Alzheimer’s, the Longest Day, and Ride to End Alzheimer’s. Alzheimer’s Association volunteers can also educate community members about dementia, advocate for Alzheimer’s disease representation in national policy, participate in clinical trials, and perform other administrative duties at local chapter offices. In short, volunteers help the Alzheimer’s Association serve caregivers, run education and public policy programs, and raise research funds.

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Impact of the problem on the industry

Other nonprofit organizations like the Alzheimer’s Association have had the challenge of recruiting volunteers since the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonprofit organizations across the U.S. lost at least one million employees during the pandemic.\textsuperscript{10} The current jobs crisis forces nonprofits to continue depending fully on volunteers.

Between 2019 and 2021, one in every four Americans formally volunteered (i.e., volunteered through a nonprofit organization).\textsuperscript{11} However, formal volunteering rates fell more than 23\% during the pandemic, the largest decline in the past few decades. In 2022, two-thirds of nonprofits reported an increase in organizational services, yet more than 28\% of nonprofits still operate with even less funding and fewer paid staff than before the pandemic.\textsuperscript{12}

For example, the Alzheimer’s Association has used an average of only 4.2\% of total revenue to fund administration (e.g., staff payroll, office location expenses) for the past five years\textsuperscript{13}:

\begin{itemize}
\item Alzheimer’s Association. (2024c). \textit{Annual report}. Alzheimer’s Association. https://www.alz.org/about/annual-report
\end{itemize}
**Chart 1: Allocation of Total Alzheimer’s Association Funds to Administration**

The following graph was manually generated based on annual funding reports available online.

In addition to avoiding organizational closures, nonprofits across the U.S. struggle to not only find and recruit volunteers, but also prevent burning out current volunteers. Hence, the pandemic’s resulting jobs crisis has also created a harmful volunteer shortage.

Americans are more eager to volunteer when there is a tangible, widespread crisis. The demand for crisis-specific volunteers (e.g., Hurricane Katrina, 9/11, COVID-19) remains high for a long period—but nonprofit organizations cannot sustain volunteer interest after the crisis peak. Americans also volunteer with priorities in mind. Nonprofits whose missions do not directly serve current crises will vie with more relevant organizations for volunteers’ time and attention.

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Additionally, world hunger, disaster recovery, and childhood cancer are among the top charities in the U.S.\textsuperscript{15} Alzheimer’s disease and dementia are not considered major crises for which to volunteer; thus, volunteer opportunities with the Alzheimers Association lack a sense of urgency.

Despite this low urgency, the demand for providing fundraising events for Alzheimer’s disease and other dementia research has not decreased: the Alzheimer’s Association announced that through its clinical trials, the first drug to treat early dementia became FDA-approved in 2023.\textsuperscript{16} The organization continues to make incredible research advancements costing millions of dollars.

Most Americans from across generations value having the opportunity to contribute to something bigger than themselves. However, 72\% of individuals volunteer for only one charitable organization, meaning volunteers are very selective with their time to give back and make the world a better place.\textsuperscript{17} Therefore, people’s drive to help others does not outweigh their overall desire for volunteer options to not only be easy, but also require low commitment.

\textsuperscript{17} Weinger, A. (2024, February 8). 15 volunteer statistics that impact your nonprofit. Double the Donation. \url{https://doublethedonation.com/volunteer-statistics/}
Market Share & Competition

Small-scale barriers

In general, several factors compete for people’s time to volunteer. Work schedule demands, personal appointments, children’s school obligations, hobbies and self-care periods, and volunteer commitments for other organizations all limit potential volunteers’ availability. The COVID-19 pandemic also heightened people’s fear of getting sick from in-person volunteering.

In addition to these small-scale barriers, Alzheimer’s Association chapter leadership acknowledges that the physical location of its volunteer opportunities—especially the annual Walk to End Alzheimer’s events across Minnesota and North Dakota—may be too far away for interested populations to commute to.

Large-scale competitors

The Alzheimer’s Association is the world’s largest nonprofit funder of Alzheimer’s disease research. Despite its impressive reputation, the organization’s top competitors include:

Alzheimer’s Disease International

Alzheimer’s Disease International (ADI) claims that it is the global voice on dementia. ADI collaborates with not only Alzheimer’s- and dementia-related organizations across 120 countries (including the World Health Organization), but also dementia patients, caretakers, and other relevant organizations. The ADI headquarters is in Lincolnshire, Illinois.

Like the Alzheimer’s Association, ADI’s mission is to raise awareness and challenge the stigma about Alzheimer’s disease. As its name suggests, ADI exists to help dementia become a global health priority to receive the attention and resources it requires.

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To achieve its mission, Alzheimer’s Disease International does the following:\(^19\)

- Offers Alzheimer’s University, an educational workshop series designed to train individuals to advocate for Alzheimer’s disease and dementia policy.
- Holds all countries around the world accountable for implementing and funding dementia action plans.
- Hosts an international conference, known as the longest-running global conference on dementia.
- Coordinates a global awareness campaign for World Alzheimer’s Month every September.
- Publishes the World Alzheimer’s Report, a well-regarded comprehensive piece which provides details on research, treatment, and care advancements.
- Encourage research by partnering with global organizations and confirm that study results will impact the overall practice.

Those who want to get involved with Alzheimer’s Disease International may do the following:\(^20\)

- Use ADI’s campaign materials to advocate for dementia policy.
- Download World Alzheimer’s Month materials and support campaign activities.
- Support the work of an Alzheimer-related association close by.
- Donate to support ADI’s activities.
- Engage with ADI’s social media accounts.
- Sign up for ADI’s newsletter to receive the latest global dementia news.

Alzheimer’s Disease International and the Alzheimer’s Association have quite a bit of overlap in services offered. However, Alzheimer’s Disease International does not offer formal volunteer events. Thus, ADI cannot compete with the Alzheimer’s Association involvement opportunities.

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Alzheimer’s Foundation of America

Like the Alzheimer’s Association, Alzheimer’s Foundation of America (AFA) exists to provide support, services, and education to individuals, families, and caregivers who are impacted by Alzheimer’s disease and other dementia.\(^{21}\) AFA also values funding research to discover better treatment and a cure for Alzheimer’s. The AFA headquarters is in New York, New York.

To achieve its mission, Alzheimer’s Foundation of America does the following:

- Operates a national toll-free helpline to connect callers across the U.S. with licensed social workers who can recommend local dementia resources.
- Provides free, confidential memory screenings through its national program.
- Offers training and continuing education to professional caregivers and dementia-care settings.
- Hosts multiple dementia-friendly activities in person and virtually each month.

Those who want to get involved with Alzheimer’s Foundation of America may do the following:\(^{22}\)

- Attend conferences through the AFA Educating America Tour.
- Advocate for public policy through the AFA Alzheimer’s Advocacy Day.
- Learn more about Alzheimer’s by attending the AFA Fireside Chat webinar series.
- Attend the AFA Golf Classic to raise awareness and funds for support services.
- Donate to support AFA’s activities.
- Engage with AFA’s social media accounts.

Involvement with AFA is primarily educational- and fundraising-related, like the Alzheimer’s Association. Alzheimer’s Foundation of America also offers a scholarship for college-


\(^{22}\) Alzheimer’s Foundation of America. (2023b). *Events*. Alzheimer’s Foundation of America.  
[https://alzfdn.org/events/](https://alzfdn.org/events/)
bound high school students who have been impacted by Alzheimer’s disease. Although AFA seeks volunteers to read scholarship essay submissions, AFA does not offer formal volunteer events. Thus, AFA cannot compete with the Alzheimer’s Association involvement opportunities.

**Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation**

The Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation (ADDF) claims that it is the only charity focused on only finding drugs for Alzheimer’s disease. The mission of ADDF is to accelerate the development of drugs that will prevent, treat, and cure Alzheimer’s disease and other dementia. The ADDF headquarters is in New York, New York.

To achieve its mission, the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation follows a venture philosophy model to fund academia and biotech research advancements, biomarker programs, and clinical trials in 20 countries. ADDF also offers funding opportunities for partners to further fuel research.

Those who want to get involved with the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation may do the following:

- Attend a variety of in-person and virtual events and conferences focused on celebrating research and raising funds for future research.
- Donate to support ADDF’s activities.
- Engage with ADDF’s social media accounts.

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Involvement with ADDF is mostly fundraising-related, like the Alzheimer’s Association. However, the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation does not offer formal volunteer events. Thus, ADDF cannot compete with the Alzheimer’s Association involvement opportunities.

**American Brain Foundation**

The American Brain Foundation exists to raise awareness about and fund research for all brain diseases and disorders. This organization claims that its “Cure One, Cure Many” philosophy allows it to cure many diseases by curing one. Its headquarters is in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

To achieve its mission, the American Brain Foundation does the following:

- Fund innovative investigations and support early-career researchers through the Next Generation Research Grants.
- Fund the top research in multiple disease areas with the Cure One, Cure Many Program.
- Fund awards in advocacy, science, and humanism.

Those who want to get involved with the American Brain Foundation may do the following:

- Become a brain donor.
- Create personalized fundraising campaigns.
- Develop a will with FreeWill to prepare for the future.

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26 American Brain Foundation. (2024e). *Who we are.* American Brain Foundation. [https://www.americanbrainfoundation.org/who-we-are/](https://www.americanbrainfoundation.org/who-we-are/)


28 American Brain Foundation. (2024b). *Cure one, cure many program.* American Brain Foundation. [https://www.americanbrainfoundation.org/cocm_program/](https://www.americanbrainfoundation.org/cocm_program/)


• Make numerous types of donations to support the American Brain Foundation’s activities (e.g., tribute or memorial gifts to recognize someone special, legacy gifts to support brain disease research, recurring donations through the Brain Squad.
• Establish a donor-advised fund or give through an already established fund.
• Engage with the organization’s social media accounts.
• Sign up for the American Brain Foundation’s newsletter to learn about research breakthroughs.

Involvement with the American Brain Foundation is only fundraising-related, like the Alzheimer’s Association. However, the American Brain Foundation not only focuses on diseases and disorders other than Alzheimer’s, but also does not offer formal volunteer events. Thus, the American Brain Foundation cannot compete with the Alzheimer’s Association involvement opportunities.

*Family Caregiver Alliance*

The Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA) exists to improve the quality of life for family caregivers and the people who receive their care.31 FCA supports caregivers and patients of various physical and cognitive impairments, including Alzheimer’s disease. The FCA headquarters is in San Francisco, California.

To achieve its mission, the Family Care Alliance does the following:

• Provide caregivers with tailored information, support, and resources through CareNav.
• Help caregivers locate support services across the country through Services by State.
• Collaborate with the National Center on Caregiving to promote policies and projects about unpaid family caregivers.
• Offer several direct services (e.g., care planning, training, legal/financial consultation, support groups) to Bay Area-only families.

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Those who want to get involved with the Family Care Alliance may do the following:

- Attend a variety of events, webinars, classes, and support groups.\(^{32}\)
- Volunteer by participate in a study or clinical trial.\(^{33}\)
- Donate to support FCA’s activities.
- Engage with the FCA’s social media accounts.
- Sign up for the FCA’s newsletter to learn about caring for themselves and others.

Involvement with the Family Caregiver Alliance is mostly caregiver support- and educational-related, like the Alzheimer’s Association. However, the FCA focuses on caring for diseases and disorders other than Alzheimer’s, and it does not offer formal volunteer events. Thus, the Family Care Alliance cannot compete with the Alzheimer’s Association involvement opportunities.

**Other major competitors**

- **The Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration (AFTD):** drives research to find a cure for frontotemporal degeneration only and improve patients’ quality of life.\(^{34}\) Headquarters are in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania.
- **Bluefield Project:** funds research to find a cure for frontotemporal dementia only.\(^{35}\) Headquarters are in San Francisco, California.
- **BrightFocus Foundation:** funds research to find cures for Alzheimer’s disease, macular degeneration, and glaucoma.\(^{36}\) Headquarters are in Clarksburg, Maryland.
- **Cure Alzheimer’s Fund:** funds research and claims it is the only nonprofit organization dedicated to finding a cure for Alzheimer’s disease.\(^{37}\) Headquarters are in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts.

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\(^{32}\) Family Caregiver Alliance. (2024a). *FCA events & classes.* Family Caregiver Alliance. [https://www.caregiver.org/connecting-caregivers/events-classes/fca-events-classes/](https://www.caregiver.org/connecting-caregivers/events-classes/fca-events-classes/)

\(^{33}\) Family Caregiver Alliance. (2024b). "Participate in a study." Family Caregiver Alliance. [https://www.caregiver.org/caregiver-resources/participate-in-study/](https://www.caregiver.org/caregiver-resources/participate-in-study/)


\(^{35}\) Bluefield Project. (2024). "About Bluefield." Bluefield Project. [https://www.bluefieldproject.org/about/](https://www.bluefieldproject.org/about/)

\(^{36}\) BrightFocus Foundation. (2023). "About us." BrightFocus. [https://www.brightfocus.org/about-us](https://www.brightfocus.org/about-us)

• **Dementia Society of America**: fund research to find cures for dementia and claims it is the nation’s leading nonprofit organization serving all causes of dementia.\(^{38}\) Headquarters are in Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

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\(^{38}\) Dementia Society, Inc. (2024). *About us*. Dementia Society of America. [https://www.dementiasociety.org/about](https://www.dementiasociety.org/about)
Stakeholder Research

There are multiple Alzheimer’s Association stakeholders who are affected by a lack of volunteer recruitment and participation. These stakeholders include:

- Alzheimer’s Association paid staff (i.e., leadership, management)
- Unpaid volunteers (i.e., Board of Directors, advisory groups, fundraising volunteers)
- Corporate sponsors and other donors
- Alzheimer’s disease patients
- Caregivers and families
- Scientific researchers
- Employers within chapter regions

These stakeholders comprise three core age groups: college students, business leaders, and retirees.

General attitudes

Stakeholders are enthusiastic about continuing to fund Alzheimer’s Association research to discover a cure for dementia and improve patients’ quality of life.

Stakeholders support the organization because they too believe in a world without Alzheimer’s disease. They believe there will be a survivor of dementia and many more after. Most volunteers have an emotional connection to Alzheimer’s disease, and that connection is what drives their participation and support.

Psychographics

College students

The average American student enrolled in higher education is female and between 18-35 years old.\textsuperscript{39} This range includes traditional-age students who are more likely to attend a university

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE

(18-25) and non-traditional students who are more likely to attend a community college (26-35). Part-time students at either institution type are also more likely to have a job on top of classes. These part-time students balance being a homeowner, spouse, and/or parent, which result in a wide range of scheduling demands outside of school. Many students who complete a healthcare- or human service-related degree may do so for several internal and external reasons. First, they may have a personal desire for health care that has been present since their childhood. Second, they may have a strong calling to serve their community and help others in need. Third, they may have immediate family members working in health care whose footsteps they want to follow. Fourth, they may be seeking a high-paying job to afford the lifestyle they seek after graduation. Additionally, college students are primarily motivated to volunteer because volunteerism aligns with their personal values. Student volunteers are also motivated by the positive impact that volunteering may have on their career. Many students feel guilty about not volunteering after they complete mandatory community service hours. In other words, college students value having a choice to volunteer, and they want their volunteer experience to be authentic and unconditional.

Finally, most college students fall within Generation Z or are Millennials. Gen Zers are heavy users of social media. Gen Z’s most-used social media platforms currently include YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Generation Z also consult company websites to inform their decisions.

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Business leaders

The average American leader in charge of a business or organization is male and between 35-55 years old. This range includes individuals who are further along in their careers and have achieved positions as directors, presidents, or other C-suite professionals. Successful company owners make good leaders because they want to help other people live a better life through their work and through what they do for customers and the organization. The best leaders seek leadership positions because they accept this responsibility and sacrifice, not because they want control, more money, or greater admiration. Successful business leaders are also leaders within their communities. Owners who are active in community organizations and initiatives can not only boost their company’s reputation, but also position their business as one that gives back. Today’s consumers highly value organizations that recognize this duty of helping others in need.

Business leaders are also motivated to volunteer because volunteer programs within the workplace directly reflect top management’s priorities. Coordinated volunteer efforts improve employee morale and company-wide teamwork, while also boosting employees’ sense of purpose at work. However, employees should not be forced to engage in volunteerism or volunteering “pet projects” simply to make an organization look good. Thus, when corporate volunteering is intentional and authentic, volunteer experiences become effective employee recruitment and retention tools in today’s competitive business landscape.

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Finally, most business leaders are Millennials or fall within Generation X. Millennials were one of the first tech-savvy generations. Millennials are now the largest population segment in the country and dominate many workplaces across industries. Millennials’ most-used social media platforms currently include YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Gen X’s most-used social media platforms currently include YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Retirees

The average American retiree is female and 55+ years old, despite Social Security payments being available to only those aged 65 and older. This range includes individuals who no longer have work responsibilities either because of their age or their personal desire. There is a plethora of reasons that motivate people to retire, including having more time to travel, pursue hobbies, be with family and friends, and improve personal health and well-being. Some people retire to explore an “encore career,” or something they have always wanted to try but did not previously have the time.

Retirees are motivated to volunteer to not only fill gaps in their less crowded schedules, but also to give back to others. Having the opportunity to share their wisdom and life lessons with younger generations is a rewarding experience for many retired people. Senior volunteers also benefit from being physically and mentally active along with a lower chance of becoming isolated during retirement. However, many retirees have worked more than 40 years in their life, so they must be passionate about a philanthropic cause to want to get involved.

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Finally, most retirees are Baby Boomers or fall within the Silent Generation. Boomers’ most-used social media platforms include YouTube and Facebook. Baby Boomers also prefer reading stories and learning about the news through newspapers and cable television.

**Intervening publics and opinion leaders**

In addition to these overarching stakeholders, there are several intervening publics and opinion leaders who are influential at carrying messages to key publics, including:

- Alzheimer’s Association headquarters (also referred to as Home Office)
- Board of Directors
- Medical & Scientific Advisory Group
- Early-Stage Advisory Group
- Chapter-specific volunteer committees
- Past Alzheimer’s Association volunteers
- Local employers within chapter regions that promote volunteering
- Local Alzheimer’s disease and dementia support groups for families
- Social media groups focused on volunteering and fundraising for Alzheimer’s research
- Club leaders at local universities and colleges (e.g., volunteering, fundraising for Alzheimer’s research)
- Students at local universities and colleges in volunteer-heavy programs (e.g., nursing, medicine, education, special education, social work)
Internal Environment

Purpose

The Alzheimer’s Association exists to discover a cure for Alzheimer’s disease and all other dementia. To achieve its mission, the Alzheimer’s Association contributes to scientific research through fundraising events, to support resources for those affected, to Alzheimer’s education through community classes, and to public policy through advocacy efforts. The Alzheimer’s Association believes that one day, there will be a world free of Alzheimer’s and all other dementia.

Accelerating research around the world

The Alzheimer’s Association is considered the largest nonprofit funder of Alzheimer’s disease research. Currently, the organization has more than $400 million invested in over 1,100 active projects spanning 56 countries.

To accelerate research, the Alzheimer’s Association also:

- Funds scientific investigations through the International Research Grant Program.
- Convenes researchers at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference (AAIC), the world’s largest and most influential forum for the dementia research community.
- Encourages scientific data sharing through the Global Alzheimer’s International Network (GAAIN), an online database that helps researchers make discoveries more quickly.
- Publishes the *Alzheimer’s & Dementia* scientific journal to share knowledge with the global scientific community.
- Offers an inclusive network, Alzheimer’s Association International Society to Advance Alzheimer’s Research and Treatment (ISTAART), for scientists, physicians, and other dementia professionals.
- Matches services and studies for patients, caregivers, and volunteers through TrialMatch.
- Funds and implements intervention trials and studies to increase knowledge about prevention and risk reduction.

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The Alzheimer’s Association made its largest-ever research investment in 2023: a landmark $100 million to 271 scientific investigations.\(^{53}\)

*Providing care and support to those affected*

To provide care and support, the Alzheimer’s Association does the following:

- Has local chapters across the U.S. that provide community services.
- Staffs the free, confidential helpline to connect callers nationwide with master’s-level clinicians and specialists.
- Conducts support groups and education programs to ensure services reach underserved populations.
- Connects those affected by Alzheimer’s disease with others through the online community forum ALZConnected.
- Offers resources and tools to empower those living with the disease.
- Provides caregivers and families with resources and information for each stage of the disease.
- Guides patients and caregivers through next steps with ALZNavigator.
- Makes it easy for families to find programs and services through the Alzheimer’s Association & AARP Community Resource Finder.

*Educating and raising awareness to grow understanding*

To educate and raise awareness, the Alzheimer’s Association does the following:

- Features new information on Alzheimer’s disease through public education programs.
- Provides clinicians with diagnostic and educational tools.
- Gives resources to address Alzheimer’s as a public health issue to public health professionals.
- Engages the nation’s lawmakers in the efforts to fight the Alzheimer’s crisis.
- Runs awareness campaigns to differentiate Alzheimer’s from typical aging.

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\(^{53}\) Alzheimer’s Association. (2024o). *Our commitment to research. Alzheimer’s Association.*
https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/research_progress/our_commitment
• Shares data and insights with healthcare professionals, legislators, and media through the annual Facts and Figures report.

**Advocating for the needs and rights of those facing Alzheimer’s**

To advocate for those affected by the disease, the Alzheimer’s Association does the following:

• Trains a network of advocates across the country through the Alzheimer’s Impact Movement (AIM).
• Helps pass landmark legislation like the National Alzheimer’s Project Act.
• Drives bipartisan support to Alzheimer’s research.
• Educates decision makers and the public on the toll Alzheimer’s takes on Americans.
• Secures quality health care and support services.
Management and workplace

Leadership

The Alzheimer’s Association comprises several leadership groups, including:54

- **Board of Directors**: includes unpaid volunteers only; defines the organization’s mission and purpose, sets policy, establishes goals and strategies, monitors general operations, and approves organizational outcomes and allocations of resources.55

- **Senior Management**: includes paid employees and includes the President/CEO; leads and directs teams responsible for the Association’s main strategic pillars.56

- **Medical and Scientific Advisory Group (MSAG)**: includes unpaid volunteer leaders from the Alzheimer’s and dementia research community; provides input on Association scientific and research initiatives.57

- **Early-Stage Advisory Group**: includes individuals who are living with Alzheimer’s disease; shares personal experiences to inspire others affected by dementia.58

Additionally, the Alzheimer’s Association developed its Strategic Plan to map where the organization wants to go to achieve its core values.59 These values are what shape the workplace culture and have resulted in the Alzheimer’s Association being ranked as a Best Non-Profit to Work For by *The Non-Profit Times* for more than a decade.60 This Strategic Plan also communicates its progress and overarching strategic objectives.

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54 Alzheimer’s Association. (2024k). *Leadership*. Alzheimer’s Association. [https://www.alz.org/about/leadership](https://www.alz.org/about/leadership)
56 Alzheimer’s Association. (2024r). *Senior management*. Alzheimer’s Association. [https://www.alz.org/about/leadership/senior_management](https://www.alz.org/about/leadership/senior_management)
57 Alzheimer’s Association. (2024m). *Medical and scientific advisory group (MSAG)*. Alzheimer’s Association. [https://www.alz.org/about/leadership/advisory-council](https://www.alz.org/about/leadership/advisory-council)
60 Alzheimer’s Association. (2024q). *Our values*. Alzheimer’s Association. [https://www.alz.org/about/our-values](https://www.alz.org/about/our-values)
Finally, the Association is transparent about organizational finances\textsuperscript{61} and governance policies.\textsuperscript{62}

**Recent adjustments**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were a handful of designated paid positions that focused on volunteer recruitment and retention. During and after the pandemic, however, the Alzheimer’s Association restructured its senior management by eliminating most volunteer-specific positions and placing these responsibilities on all employees at the organization.

In other words, there is now more pressure on employees from different areas in each local chapter to recruit and retain volunteers through a siloed approach, which may make accountability more difficult.

**Data management**

The Alzheimer’s Association does an excellent job of reporting its yearly financial allocations to administration, fundraising, and pillar-specific efforts. Users can easily find information about the types of research initiatives, education programs, support services, and advocacy efforts that the Association is working on. However, one area where data is not as accessible is volunteering.

For each of the volunteering opportunities, the responsible Alzheimer’s Association staff have different processes for organizing and maintaining data. For example, volunteers who are interested in becoming community educators must complete extensive paperwork to ensure they meet instructor qualifications. Because this intake process is strict, paid staff charged with supporting the education pillar have greater accountability for volunteer recruitment and retention.

\textsuperscript{61} Alzheimer’s Association. (2024g). *Finances*. Alzheimer’s Association. https://www.alz.org/about/finances

Education volunteer data are stored within a centralized database that makes automated communications from local chapters much more efficient.

However, volunteers who are interested in coordinating and setting up the annual Walk to End Alzheimer’s events do not have their data stored in a centralized database. Instead, these volunteers’ data are found in personal staff spreadsheets. The spreadsheet format provides helpful big-picture organization features, but updating this information can be very cumbersome and time consuming for the few volunteer-dedicated positions at the Alzheimer’s Association.

Other volunteer areas also suffer from managing data in siloed spreadsheets, which may contribute to the disconnect between departments who all communicate with volunteers daily.

*Chart 2: Total Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter Volunteers Over Time*

The following graph was manually generated based on the MN-ND volunteer data spreadsheet.
Reputation

The Alzheimer’s Association is considered a leader in Alzheimer’s disease and dementia care and research around the globe. The nonprofit organization has a high profile outside of current volunteers, participants, staff, and Association leadership.

The Alzheimer’s Association has the following corporate sponsors, ranging from Fortune 500 companies to small businesses (in order of partnership value): 63

- Edward Jones
- Marshalls
- OnStar
- Bankers Life
- BJ’s Restaurants & Brewhouse
- P&G
- Carewell
- CARS
- Crayola
- Cutco
- eBay for Charity
- Faribault Mill
- Goodcents
- HearingLife
- Lokai
- Round Pond Estate
- StarCorp
- Volta Oil
- Walmart

These sponsors have made a wide range of contributions, such as large multi-year monetary donations, regular participation at volunteer events, consumer good donations, and more. The organization itself has not been involved in any negative scandals. However, a 2022 investigation revealed that some Alzheimer’s disease drug research was a fraud, though no direct mention of the Alzheimer’s Association was present. 64

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Service

More than six million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s disease, and an additional 11 million Americans provide unpaid care for a family member or friend with dementia each year. Alzheimer’s disease also kills more people in the U.S. than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined.

The services provided by the Alzheimer’s Association are extremely meaningful and positive to people who have been diagnosed with dementia, who are caregivers, and who support the organization’s efforts to find a cure for Alzheimer’s disease. Thus, there is widespread support for organizations like the Alzheimer’s Association, particularly amongst individuals who have a personal connection to dementia.

Without organizations like the Alzheimer’s Association, families and other groups impacted by Alzheimer’s disease cannot connect with one another, gain emotional support, fund scientific breakthroughs, and learn more about the disease.

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Promotions

The Alzheimer’s Association runs several successful cross-platform marketing communications campaigns to raise concern and general awareness about Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.66

These general promotions include:

- **Some Things Come with Age**: raises awareness within the Hispanic/Latino community about changes that could be signs of Alzheimer’s disease.
- **Hopeful Together**: helps people notice the early signs of dementia and start conversations with their loved one.
- **The First Survivor**: celebrates the progress achieved thanks to supporters and leadership.
- **Music Moments**: initiates conversations about Alzheimer’s by exploring the connection between music and important life moments.
- **Any Given Moment**: recognizes the continuous work that researchers are doing to find a cure for Alzheimer’s disease.
- **Unforgettable**: recognizes the importance of underrepresented community members participating in clinical trials through a dynamic stage play.
- **Celebrity Champions**: allows actors, musicians, and athletes to use their platforms for sharing personal connections to Alzheimer’s and amplify the fight to end the disease.
- **Alzheimer’s & Brain Awareness Month (June)**: encourages everyone to talk about the brain and dementia by featuring celebrities who share why they are passionate about “going purple.”
- **World Alzheimer’s Day (September 21)**: raises awareness and challenges the stigma about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementia.
- **National Caregivers Month (November)**: pays tribute to the nation’s caregivers for their commitment to ending Alzheimer’s.

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The Alzheimer’s Association manages multiple social media platforms:

- Facebook (977,000 followers)
- Instagram (123,000 followers)
- X, formerly known as Twitter (167,900 followers)
- YouTube (39,400 subscribers)
- LinkedIn (142,000 followers)

The organization gets great follower engagement on all social media sites except for YouTube.

It is evident that social media posts follow an editorial calendar because cross-platform posts are complementary, and messaging is both balanced and consistent. The Association’s social media combines content from each of the general awareness campaigns. Social media posts equally thank donors and volunteers for contributing to future research, highlight stories of people (including celebrities) who are affected by dementia, and display what Alzheimer’s Association employees and volunteers are doing throughout the country to live its mission.

The Alzheimer’s Association also has a blog site that publishes dementia-related news and long-form narratives about individuals and families impacted by Alzheimer’s disease. On its national website, the Alzheimer's Association also shares press coverage of the same messaging from news outlets, although the organization prioritizes internally owned content.

Although the general awareness promotions also implicitly urge people to join the fight against Alzheimer’s disease, the Association does not run very many marketing communications campaigns specifically targeted for volunteers.

Perhaps its most successful, recent volunteer campaign is for the Longest Day. The Longest Day is a volunteer event that is held on the summer solstice, dedicated to outshining the darkness
This volunteer opportunity encourages people to raise funds for Alzheimer’s research by doing the things they love—no matter where they are. Advertisements for the Longest Day highlight standalone activities that volunteers can do to raise funds (e.g., Hike to End Alzheimer’s, Game to End Alzheimer’s, Bake to End Alzheimer’s).

Altogether, this content fills up newsletters from chapters and the national headquarters sent to existing volunteers and people who have indicated that they are interested in volunteering with the Alzheimer’s Association.

The Alzheimer’s Association has access to numerous potential volunteers in the U.S. and a multimillion-dollar budget for paid, nationwide recruitment efforts. However, this organization’s process of contacting prospective volunteers is currently siloed and has resulted in ineffective volunteer retention since the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Resources

The Alzheimer’s Association has a national headquarters (also referred to as Home Office) location in Chicago, Illinois, and 78 regional chapters throughout the U.S. For the Minnesota-North Dakota chapter, there are office locations at Bismarck and Fargo in North Dakota, and at Hermantown, Minnetonka, Rochester, and Saint Cloud in Minnesota.

The Alzheimer’s Association has hundreds of employees who are all equally responsible for recruiting volunteers and only a few of those employees are also tasked with organizing annual fundraising events alongside volunteers.

The Alzheimer’s Association uses about 17.5% of its total revenue to cover national fundraising and volunteer recruitment efforts, or an average of more than $74.5 million each year. The nonprofit must spread these funds across every regional chapter. Staff and existing volunteers must recruit new volunteers using various paid and free techniques. Therefore, the Alzheimer’s Association does not rely on word of mouth only for volunteer recruitment.

However, the Alzheimer’s Association needs space, food, entertainment, and other items to be donated to host annual fundraising events like the Walk to End Alzheimer’s.

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Appendix B: Primary Research

Management Interview Guide

Q1. What drew you to the organization? Why do you work there?

**Participant 1:** I have worked for nonprofit organizations for 25+ years. I was drawn to this organization because of its mission, size, and national presence.

**Participant 2:** To make a difference in the lives of people impacted by Alzheimer's and other types of dementia. My dad experienced dementia, and I do not want other families to go through the journey alone. As a communicator, it is meaningful to increase awareness about the programs we offer and raise funds to one day find the first survivor of Alzheimer's.

**Q1 Results**

These participants hold director-level positions at the MN-ND chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association. They both were drawn to the organization for positive motivations.
Q2. What is the organizational structure of the Alzheimer’s Association? What is governance/authority like at the regional (i.e., chapter) level vs. the national (i.e., headquarters) level?

**Participant 1:** The National (Home Office) staff act as advisors to the local/regional staff. They help equip us with tools and connect with our colleagues across the country. On the local level, we are guided by our CEO and Senior staff members.

**Participant 2:** The Association is one nonprofit nationally, a 501 (c)(3), with state chapters underneath it, and a national office (called internally as the Home Office) based in Chicago. Our governing board of directors is national, and the chapters have advisory boards. You can find more info on our website at [https://www.alz.org/about/leadership](https://www.alz.org/about/leadership).

**Q2 Results**

The Alzheimer’s Association headquarters provides directions to all national chapters via the board of directors. Directions then trickle down from chapter-specific advisory boards.
Q3. How and why do employees of different chapters communicate with one another? How and why do employees communicate with headquarters?

Participant 1: In some cases/departments, we have regular meetings with our colleagues across the country. In other cases, we must reach out to people to connect. We connect with staff at the headquarters to learn more about standards and what is occurring across the country.

Participant 2: We have a national all-staff "Townhall" meeting every few months, and then additional meetings at the chapter and region levels. For example, I have a Region 5 Communicators meeting with other comms people from our region (IA, NE, WI, MN, SD), and then our MN-ND Chapter staff meeting is once a month as well. The Home Office runs our employee intranet website called The Hub, and it provides resources and guidance to chapters.

In Communications, they provide social media and media toolkits, website training and support, work with our celebrity champions, run national fundraising campaigns, etc. They also run the national blog, manage a photo and video library we can use, manage the national website and PR stories and social media pages, lead our Chapter Comms monthly calls for nationwide comms staff, where they give updates on initiatives/research, direction for messaging, tracking media and fundraising outcomes, and more. We have our own chapter website pages that are housed within the national website. We also have Walk Facebook group pages for all our MN-ND walks.

The main functions and departments are Care & Support (programs), DEI, Public Policy, Concern & Awareness (MarComm), Research, Development, Operations, and Community Engagement (volunteers). There are lots of work groups.
Q3 Results

The Alzheimer’s Association headquarters provides high-level strategies and standards for local chapters to abide by, but it is up to chapter leadership to enforce this guidance. There may be an overlap in duties regionally. There may be an opportunity for chapters to learn from one another.
Q4. What opportunities are available to individuals who want to get involved with the Alzheimer's Association? What does the organization rely on volunteers to do to function?

**Participant 1:** Volunteers serve on our boards and on development/fundraising committees, assist with advocacy, community education, support group facilitation, special events, office work and internships. The Alzheimer's Association is a volunteer-led organization. We rely on volunteers to assist with everything we do.

**Participant 2:** You can find this info on our website at [https://www.alz.org/get-involved-now/volunteer/find-a-volunteer-opportunity](https://www.alz.org/get-involved-now/volunteer/find-a-volunteer-opportunity). I recommend you contact our Director of Grants and Mission Engagement. She can go into more detail because she works closely with volunteers.

**Q4 Results**

Volunteers help with several functions of the Alzheimer’s Association.
Q5. How does the Alzheimer's Association currently recruit volunteers (e.g., methods, frequency, internal strategy)?

**Participant 1:** All Chapter staff are tasked with recruiting volunteers. Volunteers are recruited through networking, online postings, social media, and at our events. Our current volunteers also help to recruit new volunteers.

**Participant 2:** Our pillars (sections of the organization) recruit their own volunteers, or they work with MarComm to do it, depending on the situation. We are on VolunteerMatch.com, and we post on social media, in our e-newsletter, use advertising, have things listed on our website, talk about it in meetings like the Chamber of Commerce or Rotary, etc.

**Q5 Results**

The Alzheimer’s Association recruits volunteers using several in-person and online methods.
Q6. How does the Alzheimer’s Association currently retain volunteers (e.g., methods, frequency, internal strategy)?

Participant 1: Staff engage in frequent contact points with volunteers. These can be mission conversations, electronic cards, a volunteer newsletter, small gifts of appreciation, and celebration parties.

Participant 2: We have a national standardized orientation and onboarding program. Then it is up to the person/team working with volunteers, but this is done through relationship building, ongoing check ins, goal setting, providing feedback, assessments, thanking them, our Volunteer Voice quarterly volunteer email newsletter, etc. There is a 30-day check-in and 90-day goal-setting meeting recommended for new volunteers. One issue is that there are a lot of resources on our intranet site, but chapters may not be aware of them or using them. Or there may not be enough time to do what is best practice with competing priorities. We feature and thank volunteers during National Volunteer Appreciation Week in April. There is a Home Office toolkit for Chapters with ideas around this. From The Hub: Recognizing & Retaining Volunteers – The Association is developing a nationwide volunteer recognition and retention strategy and tools based on feedback from our volunteers. Based on market research, volunteers indicated that the best recognition they receive from us includes engagement in meaningful conversations and feedback about their activities, inclusion in discussions about the chapter's community efforts, and authentic conversations about growth opportunities. Chapters may individually offer thank-you and recognition campaigns until a nationwide effort is unveiled.

Q6 Results

The Alzheimer’s Association uses multiple in-person and online techniques to thank volunteers for working with the organization and encourage them to volunteer again.
Q7. What economic, political, and social issues has the MN-ND Chapter encountered when recruiting and retaining volunteers? What has changed in the last few years that has also impacted the volunteer landscape?

**Participant 1:** As a nonprofit organization, we do not have a lot of money to spend on recruitment or retention. We are competing with other fantastic volunteer opportunities offered by other nonprofits. In the last few years, many volunteers have favored virtual volunteer opportunities. Some of our opportunities can be done virtually, but not all of them.

**Participant 2:** Our Director of Grants and Mission Engagement can answer this the best. My understanding is that we lost volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic, also when many of our walks had to go virtual or be cancelled, and some have not returned.

**Q7 Results**

The Alzheimer's Association is competing with other volunteer-driven organizations, as well as the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, for volunteers’ time. The organization does not have a large budget to recruit and retain volunteers either.
Q8. For each type of volunteer opportunity, approximately how many more volunteers does the organization need to live up to its mission?

**Participant 1:** It depends on the opportunity. Committees can always use more volunteers. We must be mindful of staff capacity and quality versus quantity. Some staff do not have the capacity to manage more volunteers. And adding 10 new volunteers to one area is not always the right answer if it is not the right volunteers.

**Participant 2:** I am not sure. Please consult our Director of Grants and Mission Engagement.

**Q8 Results**

Although more volunteers in certain areas will be helpful, it is not the universal fix for all departments in the Alzheimer’s Association. The organization values quality over quantity.
Q9. What will happen if the organization continues to struggle recruiting and retaining
volunteers (e.g., short-term harm, long-term damage)?

Participant 1: If the number of volunteers stops growing, then I think the organization will
stop growing. The budget might not continue to grow, and we might not be able to continue serving
more people each year.

Participant 2: This could impact our fundraising, which impacts everything else—
staffing, how much research we can invest in, awareness of our services, ability to deliver
volunteer-led classes and support groups for people impacted by Alzheimer's and other types of
dementia, etc.

Q9 Results

The Alzheimer’s Association cannot operate and fund research without the help of
volunteers.
Q10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participant 1: No.

Participant 2: From The Hub:

Each chapter selects which priority positions to promote locally based on a strategic community assessment and data-informed, chapter-specific Community Development Model. The current nationwide volunteer roles available are:

- Community Educator
- Community Representative
- Data Entry Volunteers
- Early-Stage Social Engagement
- Faith Outreach Representatives
- Meeting Attendance Data Entry Volunteer
- Program Tech Support
- Promoters
- Support Group Facilitator
- Support Group Mentor
- Virtual Community Educator
- Virtual Community Representative

Q10 Results

A community assessment determines which job openings are prioritized more than others locally and nationally.
Key Findings

Q1 Key Finding
People want to work for the Alzheimer’s Association because they have a personal connection to Alzheimer’s disease and dementia, or they support what the organization stands for.

Q2 Key Finding
Local chapters of the Alzheimer’s Association are influenced by the national “Home Office.”

Q3 Key Finding
Employees of Alzheimer’s Association chapters have inconsistent communications with their colleagues from other chapters and from headquarters.

Q4 Key Finding
The Alzheimer’s Association heavily depends on volunteers to function.

Q5 Key Finding
Departments are mostly siloed with recruiting volunteers, although departments may work with MarComm to coordinate recruitment efforts.

Q6 Key Finding
It is up to the area that recruited volunteers to retain them. A nationwide volunteer retention strategy is underway.

Q7 Key Finding
Most of the Alzheimer’s Association volunteering opportunities are in person, yet many volunteers now prefer online options.
Q8 Key Finding

The demand for more volunteers is different across departments and dependent on staff capacity in each department.

Q9 Key Finding

If the Alzheimer’s Association cannot recruit and retain enough volunteers, the organization will not be able to raise the funds needed to cover the costs of dementia-advancing research.

Q10 Key Finding

The Alzheimer’s Association headquarters and chapters prioritize certain professional roles based on a higher-level strategy. These roles may or not be the same for both parties.
Insights

To help solve the volunteer recruitment problem for the Alzheimer’s Association, a communications plan with a strategy driven by the following insight is needed.

Partner with all age groups

The Alzheimer’s Association does an excellent job at building brand awareness through a wide range of marketing and communication efforts. The national nonprofit has also historically focused on middle-aged and older adults when recruiting volunteers. Whereas middle-aged individuals tend to volunteer to set a good example for their children, older adults tend to have more stable personal finances that allow them to donate to worthy causes. However, the Association has not done much work partnering with younger adults, especially those attending colleges and universities.

The Minnesota-North Dakota chapter could be one of the first chapters to develop a plan to better partner with younger adults in addition to middle-aged and older adults when recruiting volunteers. The Association headquarters is currently developing a national volunteer retention plan. Therefore, creating a strategy that targets a younger and more energetic generation could be crucial for providing a complementary volunteer recruitment plan. A strategy for partnering with people from all age groups will also help the Alzheimer’s Association improve gaps due to staff turnover rates and low capacity for existing staff.
Method

Hailey Seipel completed remote, in-depth interviews using the Zoom conferencing application. The interviews were conducted between January and February 2024 with two total respondents with leadership positions at the Alzheimer’s Association.

Hailey is a graduate student at Winona State University. She completed these interviews per the MCOM 695: Thesis/Project course taught by Dr. Stacey Kanihan.