BREWSTER, MA. - April 23, 2020

The motto of the Alzheimer’s Family Support Center (AFSC) is “Until There’s A Cure, There’s Community.” Their mission is to provide free support, information, education and social connection to Cape Cod’s many families living with Alzheimer’s and other dementia-related diseases. This locally based grassroots non-profit has been providing such services in every town on Cape Cod for the past five years. Now, with social distancing in place, they have expanded to virtual services seven days a week. As part of their community commitment, their newest initiative “The Cards for Hope Project” brings needed wishes of support to many of their close community partners in Cape Cod’s long-term care facilities.

Long-term care facilities have been particularly hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The day-to-day impact of the crisis for residents, families, and staff members of these communities can be devastating. Most have had strict no-visitor policies since mid-March, so residents have not been able to see families, friends, or loved ones for more than a month. Quarantine protocols prevent group social activities and dining, with residents kept safely in their rooms alone for most of the day. Staff is doing as much as possible to keep residents engaged, but safety protocols are time consuming and the workload is staggering.

This lack of contact can be particularly challenging for families dealing with loved ones with Alzheimer’s or dementia. Phone use by people with dementia diseases can be difficult and online apps like FaceTime or Zoom can sometimes cause more confusion than comfort.

In response, the Alzheimer’s Family Support Center has initiated the Cards for Hope Project, soliciting personal greeting cards from the local community to distribute to every long-term care facility on Cape Cod so that residents and staff members know people care about and are thinking of them. The first delivery went to Pleasant Bay Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Brewster. In one day (April 21st), the AFSC delivered more than 100 beautiful cards created and donated by community members.

The AFSC received this email from Adrienne Jones of Brewster the following day:

“At a time when we cannot visit, hug or hold hands with, or look into the eyes of our loved ones, it feels more important than ever to show them that they are remembered, they are loved, and they are important. It is crucial to express our deep gratitude to the staff who have put themselves at risk to continue working while taking on our roles nurturing and caring for our loved ones, often as if they were their own family. Let's share the love, not the disease.”
And Steve Colarusso, Executive Director of Pleasant Bay, added this:

“The team at Pleasant Bay is so very grateful for the outpouring of community support through the Alzheimer’s Family Support Center. During difficult times, small gestures of appreciation make all the difference to our employees working tirelessly to provide safety and quality of life to our residents.”

If you would like to contribute a card with your own message of appreciation/support, you can drop it off at the Alzheimer’s Family Support Center office at 2095 Main Street in Brewster in a Ziploc bag, or mail it in to that address, or call them and they will come and pick it up from you. They will make sure that all cards and well wishes are delivered safely - please do not deliver them yourselves. For more information about the Cards for Hope Project, please call (508) 896-5170, email info@capecodalz.org, or go to http://www.alzheimerscapecod.org

The AFSC is also sending out daily email blasts with current information and fun ways to pass the time with loved ones. Their staff has constantly updated lists of local resources for food, pharmacy, legal and other needs. They also send daily videos to keep caregivers informed and their spirits up. All videos remain accessible at https://www.alzheimerscapecod.org/march-memory-madness-what-to-do-while-you-are-flattening-the-curve.html You can sign up to receive these videos by email at https://www.alzheimerscapecod.org/contact.html

Any caregiver needing information or support can call (508) 896-5170 seven days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Messages are checked regularly. Donations in any amount are greatly appreciated and are vital to insuring these free services remain available across the Cape Cod community.

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The Alzheimer’s Family Support Center of Cape Cod provides an array of free, comprehensive services to the Cape’s Alzheimer’s/dementia community. For information about the AFSC, call (508) 896-5170; email support@capecodalz.org; or visit our website: www.alzheimerscapecod.org