

COINS FOR ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH TRUST (CART), A ROTARY INITIATIVE

By Bob Bokma, Rotary Club of Gaithersburg

What is Alzheimer's disease and why should we help find a cure?

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is one of several dementias affecting mostly older people. It seems that everyone has a story about how AD has affected them, perhaps in a family member or friend. When it strikes a loved one, the disease hits families hard.

AD is a brain disorder that gradually destroys brain cells and affects a person's memory, ability to learn, make judgments, communicate, and carry out basic daily activities. The cause is unknown, and there is no known cure.

Here are some sad and hard-hitting facts about just Alzheimer's disease:

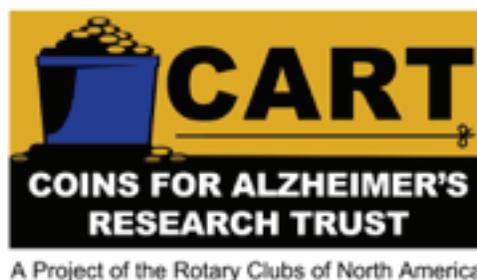
- Approximately 5.4 million Americans are affected.
- Symptoms generally show around age 60, and the risk goes up with age.
- It is estimated that one third of Americans over age 85 will have AD.
- There are massive cell loss changes in a brain affected by advanced AD.

The cortex has shriveled up and areas involved in thinking, planning and remembering are severely damaged. Shrinkage is especially severe in the hippocampus, an area of the cortex that plays a key role in forming new memories. Ventricles (fluid-filled spaces within the brain) grow larger, filling the vacant space of the brain cavity.

Your Club can join in a simple activity to provide money for cutting-edge research on Alzheimer's disease. It can participate in CART (Coins for Alzheimer's Research Trust)!

CART is a Rotary-initiated project that illustrates the amazing power of the Rotary Brand. It was started in 1995 in South Carolina and is spreading throughout the United States and Canada.

Donations of pocket change and small bills add up to REAL money – enough to let the CART Fund to grant “seed” money for high impact research addressing prevention and, ultimately, a cure for Alzheimer's. By providing grants to researchers in the early stages of a line of research, CART lets its grant recipients explore approaches to arresting or curing AD that may be different from ideas being pursued by big pharmaceutical companies. When one of these studies shows promise, a CART grant recipient can



attract additional grants from a larger foundation or a pharmaceutical company. Our donations of coins and dollars are multiplied by people and organizations with deeper pockets.

A simplest form of doing CART is for a key person in a participating club to put collection buckets (LBB's, little blue buckets) on the tables at Club meetings and encourage members and guests to drop in their pocket or purse change. A small effort at every Club meeting can bloom into a recurring commitment by members. The kerplunk of coins in the blue buckets becomes a welcome ritual.

Here are other ideas:

- Put an annual budget line item into the Club's budget.
- Do special offerings at assembly meetings, charter nights, club happy hours, etc.)
- Get Club members to commit to small weekly amounts collected monthly, quarterly or annually.
- Hold an Alzheimer's disease awareness event with presenters and a video.

The CART Fund can also welcome contributions of currency, checks or credit cards, see <http://www.cartfund.org/cart/cartfundgive/>.

What has CART achieved?

As of May, 2019 CART has awarded \$8.2 million dollars in 50 grants to recognized U.S. research institutions.

Great examples of results from CART grants include the following:

- Development of the first diagnostic method for use in live patients (in vivo isotope test with MRI).
- Studies to find ways for treatment drugs to reach the brain more effectively, passing through the blood brain barrier.
- Development of another in vivo test, the eye test.

Some additional facts about CART:

By CART Fund by-laws, 100% of donated funds go to Alzheimer's disease research - cutting edge research that otherwise is unlikely to be funded.

All administrative expenses of the Fund are paid from interest earned from invested contributions.

(continued on page 9)