



Alexandra Abbott (left), Piedmont region program manager for the Alzheimer's Association of Western North Carolina, spoke recently to the Belmont Rotary Club along with Brittany Blain (center), manager of the Walk to End Alzheimer's in this area. Rotarian Michelle Petty of Gaston Hospice and Palliative Care, hosted the program. PHOTO PROVIDED BY TED HALL.

## Upcoming event to raise funds, awareness of Alzheimer's disease

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Held annually in more than 600 communities nationwide, the Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research. The Gaston County walk is scheduled for Oct. 14 at CaroMont Health Park in Gastonia.

Belmont Rotarians learned about the walk and about Alzheimer's disease when Alexandra Abbott, Piedmont region program manager of the Alzheimer's Association of Western North Carolina, spoke recently at a Belmont Rotary Club meeting.

She began her presentation by posing this question: "What disease kills more Americans than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined?" Alzheimer's disease is the answer.

"More than six million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, and over 11 million Americans provide unpaid care for people with Alzheimer's or other dementia," Abbott said.

By 2025, it's estimated more than

210,000 North Carolinians age 65 or older will have Alzheimer's.

The disease isn't new. German psychiatrist Dr. Alois Alzheimer in 1906 first described changes in the brain, including the formation of plaques and tangles. It's these changes that cause nerve cells to die and lead to shrinkage of the brain, which results in changes in memory, thinking and behavior. It was 90 years after Dr. Alzheimer's work before the first medication was developed to treat the disease.

"While Alzheimer's isn't the only form of dementia, it is the most common form," Abbott said. "And age is the greatest known risk factor for Alzheimer's."

Other risk factors include genetics and family history. Having a close relative with Alzheimer's increases one's risk, especially if more than one.

More facts to consider:

- 34% over age 85 will be diagnosed with dementia.
- Women are at higher risk than men.
- Almost two-thirds of Americans living with Alzheimer's are women.
- Blacks are twice as likely to get Alzheimer's as whites.

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- Hispanics are 1.5 times more likely.

In her presentation, Abbott also covered the stages of Alzheimer's and progress in the development of treatments for the disease. She then introduced Brittany Blain, manager in this area of the upcoming Walk to End Alzheimer's.

### Upcoming event

CaroMont Health Park in Gastonia (where the Honey Hunters play baseball) will be the site of the Walk to End Alzheimer's for Gaston, Cleveland and Lincoln counties on Saturday, Oct. 14.

Edward Jones Investments is the national sponsor, and Belmont Rotarian Don Hartsoe of Edward Jones will have a team in the walk, which is one of 17 in North Carolina. Participants will walk one or two miles to raise funds for the fight against Alzheimer's. Registration is free.

For more on Alzheimer's disease and the Alzheimer's Walk, including entering a team or registering as an individual, go to [alz.org/northcarolina](http://alz.org/northcarolina), or call 800-272-3900.