

Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame
Archive Project
Inception to Induction
Long Island Alzheimer's Foundation

Year of Founding: 1988

Issues Addressed: Family services, education, healthcare

Induction Category and Year: Seniors, 2002

Founder: Janet Walsh

Personal Quote: On the Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame's creation and purpose, she wrote, "This venture will inspire others to 'reach for the moon' in an attempt to help others."

History: Janet Walsh's own experience with her father's death from Alzheimer's disease inspired her to take direct action for her community. Remembering her own sense of isolation as her father suffered, she together with four other women who also had a parent or grandparent diagnosed with the disease, founded the Long Island Alzheimer's Foundation (LIAF) to ensure a support network for families impacted by the disease. She believed that in addition to medical support and research, the victims' families needed emotional care as well to cope with the progressive disease. As she explained, "I knew from personal experience that caregivers need so much more assistance that simply wasn't available to them."

While the LIAF initially focused on counseling for caregivers, its services expanded to include addressing issues directly related to the disease and its progression in Long Island's rapidly aging community. She structured the LIAF to cooperate with the healthcare community spreading information and awareness of the disease. Through its periodic "Doctors' Dinners" and other conferences and workshops, the foundation has promoted the importance of early detection and treatment to slow the progression of the disease.

Because the government has allocated limited resources for Alzheimer's patients and their caregivers, she has strongly advocated for the LIAF to receive a fair share of the limited state/federal funding available and solicited private corporations and individuals for support as well. With other organizations also suffering from budgetary pitfalls, she worked to ensure their coverage under LIAF's grant programs. In 2000 alone, it offered more than \$40,000 in grants to other smaller organizations.

Under her guidance, the LIAF has grown to become one of Long Island's premier organizations in serving community members impacted by the disease. With its rates rising as Long Island's population ages, the LIAF has risen to the challenge to offer its services to the community. As of her 2002 induction, it served an estimated 135,000 individuals with the disease.

In addition to her work with the LIAF, she also worked to offer direct aid to those newly diagnosed with the disease. Having been informed that she herself has the ApoE gene for

Alzheimer's and will likely suffer from it in the future, she, together with a coalition of neuroscientists and other memory enhancement experts, developed the MemorySparks program to act as a "memory fitness program" for those likely to suffer from the disease. Such memory exercises, she discovered, strengthened the brain's ability to cope with Alzheimer's degenerative affects.

As of her 2002 induction, she lives in Sands Point, with her husband Stephen and her two children. She is very active in the community and frequently has appeared on the radio, television, and in print to offer her insights on Alzheimer's and those who suffer from it. She was the chair of the Healthcare Committee, NYS Delegation to the White House Conference on Aging in 1995. From 1993-1996, she was also a member of the NYS Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia. In addition to her induction into the Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame, she has received numerous other awards for her years of dedication and service.

Agency Mission: "To help lighten the burden and improve the quality of life for those suffering with Alzheimer's disease-and their caregivers."

Scope of Activities: The LIAF's services include offering assistance as well as information to those interested in Alzheimer's. In addition, it promotes awareness for the disease and the importance of early treatment.

Volunteer Involvement: As, the LIAF is a non-profit, it relies on volunteer activists will to devote their time and help to the organization's mission.

Submitted by: Colin Walfield, Summer 2010

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