



421 East Capitol Avenue, #100, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1789  
Phone: 217-785-3356, Fax: 217-785-4477, Web: [www.state.il.us/aging](http://www.state.il.us/aging)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 22, 2010

**CONTACT:**

Kimberly Parker 312/814.1577

## **IL Dept on Aging Thanks Family Caregivers in Observance of Awareness Month; Highlights Support Resources**

*Agency addresses issues of Alzheimer's disease for families of individuals with memory loss*

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) Director Charles D. Johnson is thanking family caregivers for making an extra effort to provide special attention and assistance to their loved ones. Director Johnson made the comments in observance of November as National Family Caregivers Month.

Family caregivers serve as a critical component in providing the long term care for older adults. Caregivers may need to help their loved ones with a broad range of activities, such as bathing, dressing, cooking and eating. In addition, caregivers may have to assist with legal and financial matters, such as making medical decisions, paying bills, handling investments and budgeting accounts.

“Caregiving is fundamental to families because their assistance lends directly to the quality of life for countless individuals. Many individuals in need of care, including older adults, would have difficulty remaining in their homes and community without the support of their relatives and caregivers. But, caregivers also needs support or they risk putting their own health and well being at risk,” said Director Johnson.

The Illinois Department on Aging has set up more than 100 Caregiver Resource Centers across the state. Through partnering with the 13 Area Agencies on Aging and local service providers, family caregivers receive information, assistance, training, counseling and respite care through the Family Caregiver Support Program.

Information about caregiver support programs was part of the issues IDoA addressed at the Alzheimer's Awareness Family Caregiver Conference, held last week in Springfield. The annual conference, sponsored by IDoA in conjunction with Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, Center for Alzheimer Disease and Related Disorders and the Alzheimer's Association – Greater Illinois Chapter, focused on caregivers, partners, friends and family of individuals with memory loss disorder.

Alzheimer's is a neurological disorder that destroys the brain's memory cells. It is the most common form of dementia. It causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior and can be severe enough to affect work, lifelong hobbies or social life. Alzheimer's gets worse over time, and is the seventh-leading cause of death in the United States. There are more than 35 million people in the world with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. And the number of people with Alzheimer's disease is predicted to nearly double every 20 years. Here in Illinois there are estimated to be more than 210,000 with the incurable disease.

In addition to observing Alzheimer's Awareness Month and Family Caregivers Month, November also serves as the kick off to the holiday season. It is the perfect time for families to pay extra attention to older relatives.

Signs that indicate older adults may need assistance include:

- Decreased mobility, forgetfulness
- Neglected personal hygiene
- Change in appetite
- Unfilled and/or unopened medical prescriptions
- Lack of home maintenance
- Unusual display of unopened mail
- Their loved one may be mishandling their finances, for example, not paying their bills or losing money.

For more information about program services to assist older adults in Illinois and their caregivers, call the Department on Aging Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327.

# # #