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## **SANTA CLARA COUNTY PLEDGES TO BECOME DEMENTIA FRIENDLY**

*Part of groundbreaking national effort to support people with dementia and foster quality of life for them and their caregivers*

*Announcement made at today's White House Conference on Aging*

Santa Clara County, CA – In 2015, there are an estimated 590,000 people with Alzheimer's disease living in California and this number is projected to rise to 840,000 in the next decade, creating an urgent need to support people with dementia and their caregivers.

In a groundbreaking national effort, Santa Clara County is heeding that call and today announced that it will become "dementia friendly." A dementia friendly community is defined as one that is informed, safe and respectful of individuals with dementia and their families, provides supportive options, and fosters quality of life. The announcement was made today at the [White House Conference on Aging](#).

"As we become a World Health Organization designated age friendly community we see the importance of becoming a dementia friendly county as well," said Jim Ramoni, Director of the Department of Aging and Adult Services. "We're proud to help address this crisis and give help and hope to those facing Alzheimer's and dementia."

Led by the Dementia Friendly America initiative (DFA), Santa Clara County is taking action by leveraging tailored resources in business, community-based services and supports, faith communities, health care communities, legal and financial services, local government and residential settings. The work toward dementia friendliness will involve:

- Raising awareness about dementia and transforming attitudes
- Having supportive options that foster quality of life
- Supporting caregivers and families touched by the disease
- Promoting meaningful participation in community life
- Reaching those who are underserved

Santa Clara County joins communities from across the nation in today's announcement including: Tempe, AZ; Denver, CO; Prince George's County, MD; Knoxville, TN; and the state of West Virginia.

“Alzheimer’s disease and dementia can be devastating to American families, but we are not powerless to support those living with the disease, their caregivers and loved ones,” said Senator Bill Frist, national spokesperson for Dementia Friendly America. “Starting in these communities, we’re building a nationwide effort to educate Americans about dementia, equip business owners and first responders to recognize and assist those with memory loss, and empower people with Alzheimer’s and dementia to engage independently and safely in community life for as long as possible.”

Dementia Friendly America is building on the leadership of [ACT on Alzheimer’s](#) and 34 dementia friendly communities in Minnesota it created. The model employed in Minnesota includes a rigorous, community-based process that brings people together to help a community create a supportive environment for people with dementia. More than 50 organizations – including AARP, the Alzheimer’s Association, CVS/Caremark, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National League of Cities, and USAgainstAlzheimer’s – have joined forces to make dementia friendly communities a reality across America through DFA with the goal of piloting 15 communities by 2016.

As of 2014 there were 1,573,000 Alzheimer’s and dementia caregivers in California, generating 1,791 million hours of unpaid care. Additionally, the physical and emotional impact of dementia caregiving is estimated to have resulted in \$895 million in health care spending on caregivers in 2014 alone.

DFA is set to launch a web-portal in late summer, which will include sector-specific tools and resources for those interested in working toward dementia friendliness. Those interested in learning more about the initiative are encouraged to visit the website, [www.dfamerica.org](http://www.dfamerica.org), which will be updated on an ongoing basis as the tools and resources are being developed.

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The Dementia Friendly America initiative (DFA) is a cross-sector, national effort leveraging tailored resources and tools to equip all community sectors to support those with dementia and their caregivers and families. By 2016, the Dementia Friendly America initiative will pilot 15 dementia friendly communities across the nation.