

Our Story

Caregiver: Mike Stanford

Member: Marcia Stanford

Active: October 2013 - March 2015

Marcia was diagnosed with Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease and Primary Progressive Aphasia in December of 2010 at the age of 50 (a year after this picture was taken). While being a full time mother to our two kids, Marcia had worked as a personal trainer and taught a variety of fitness classes at the Hillsborough YMCA, Silver Saddle Swim Club in Branchburg, Senior Chair exercise at Pluckemin Presbyterian Church and Health Quest in Flemington. After being diagnosed, Marcia continue to teach classes until the summer of 2013, when her disease made it too difficult to continue doing what she loved to do for so many years.

Marcia kept busy until the fall of 2013 having lunch or shopping with friends and teaching or attending exercise classes. She could safely be home by herself for a few hours a day while our kids were in school and I was at work. By September of 2013, it became clear that Marcia needed care and oversight 24 hours a day. I reached out to the Adult Day Center, and by October she was attending the ADC two days a week. Marcia was far younger than most other members, but she enjoyed being out of the house and participating in the variety of activities available. A few weeks after enrolling, she suffered a major seizure and was hospitalized for a week, and needed a few more weeks to recover. When she was well enough to return to the Day Center, two days a week was no longer sufficient. Marcia needed to be there 5 days a week, and the ADC was able to accommodate us.

While Marcia came in everyday greeting everyone with a hug and a big smile, she also understood what was happening to her and she had difficulty communicating, both frustrating and upsetting her. But the staff at the ADC worked very hard to find the right way to involve Marcia and gave her a tremendous amount of individual attention and made her laugh, feel loved and cared for.

Marcia was a regular attendee of the ADC until March, 2015 and she passed away a few weeks later, just after our 22nd anniversary and just before her 55th birthday. Throughout Marcia's illness, our kids were in their early/mid teens with a normal load of activities. I was working full time at Bayer Healthcare in Morristown and struggled to balance my role as a father, employee, spouse and full-time caregiver. Being able to trust in Marcia's care 5 days a week allowed me to work, worry-free and my kids to have as normal a teenage life as possible. Truthfully, I'm not sure what I would have done without the services of the Day Center. It's doubtful I would have been able to continue working, though I was too young to retire. The ADC allowed me to keep working, our kids to be kids, and Marcia to participate in activities that made her happy. For most of the day, I could work without concern over her safety, which provided me an outlet for the stress that comes with caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's and significant communication challenges.

I don't have an appropriate way to give my thanks to the staff for the services they provide those in need, as well as their caregivers. Most people don't give much of a thought to Day Centers until a need arises. That certainly was the case for me. But our need surely came, and came sooner than I had expected. The Day Center was there for us, and so many others. And they will be there for those who have caregiving needs in the years to come.