

Alzheimer's Podcast with "Around the Triangle" Full Transcript

Host Kyle Wilson introduces Tim and Gina on the "Around the Triangle" podcast to discuss [Alzheimer's and Dementia care](#).

Originally aired on June 16, 2019. Segment begins at 2:00.

Kyle Wilson: June is also known as [Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month](#). Now in preparation the [Alzheimer's Association of Eastern North Carolina](#) they held their annual [Blondes vs. Brunettes flag football game fundraiser](#) and they do great work raising awareness about the disease as well as raising money to help with research. But, maybe a bit less visible are those working in the background actually assisting Alzheimer's sufferers and, and family members who are affected by this disease. Tim and Gina Murray own aware senior care based in Cary.

They provide a variety of [skilled care services](#) for clients with Alzheimer's and Dementia. I'm gonna let them fill in the details of some of the services that they provide. But I wanted to bring Tim and Gina in studio today to talk about Alzheimer's disease in general and to speak to some of the assistance that is available locally. Tim and Gina thanks so much for coming in and being a part of around the triangle.

Tim Murray: Oh, you're welcome Kyle, it's great to be here.

Gina Murray: Thank you for letting us be here.

The Impact and Consequences of Alzheimer's in North Carolina

Kyle: Well, when we talk about Alzheimer's and dementia in general **how many people roughly do these diseases impact?**

Gina: Oh it's a staggering number and the numbers growing each year. They feel like *there's over 170,000 people in North Carolina alone*.

Kyle: Just in our state.

Gina: Just in our state that are affected with memory issues some sort of dementia and it's I would say close to **two-thirds of our clients have some memory issues** some level of cognitive, cognitive impairment.

Kyle: Now you say the number's growing. Is, is that because we're getting better at detecting it or is something happening in the background that we don't, we don't know about yet?

Gina: I think the better detection. Early interventions we just assumed that memory loss was associated with growing older and it's not. It's not a natural part of aging. It truly is a disease.

Aware Senior Care Founding and Roots in Alzheimer's Care

Kyle: What prompted you to, to launch a business to look after and take care of folks dealing with this?

Tim: Well really it was our experiences with our own parents. Gina has been in nursing really her entire career first and foremost was a mom following me around the Navy. And then corporate.

But with Gina's Dad, Andy, and my stepdad, Jack, and [currently with my mother](#) it prompted us that we felt home care could be done better. There was a need for great care and it was Gina who took the initiative and we did some research five years ago. We're celebrating our fifth anniversary of the company this year. We decided to start Aware Senior Care just so we can take care of people in our community and it's been, it's been an absolute privilege.

Gina: It has. I think having experienced it on the other side, really we can empathize with those families saying [what do I do? I don't know which way to turn](#).

Kyle: What are some of the biggest challenges associated with Alzheimer's care?

Gina: I think understanding that it is a disease. It still has a stigma attached to it that you know this person is crazy when that's not what's going on. *It's brain failure. Their brain is failing and they're gonna ask you the same question over and over because they no longer have the ability to remember.* So, getting frustrated and angry, while understandable, is not helpful.

The Stages of Alzheimer's and How its Progression Varies

Kyle: Let's talk about some of the stages of Alzheimer's. In doing my own research, I don't know a lot about the disease. So it's been kind of eye-opening to me. I was surprised to learn just how long some people are able to live with the symptoms.

Bad memory loss or just some of the other motor function that begins to slow down. **What surprised you as you learned and dealt with Alzheimer's?**

Gina: I think that everyone's progression is different. Some have a very rapid progression and it's only a few years and others it's 12, 14 years of this very long unfortunate disease taking this person away.

Kyle: And it's got to be scary not, not just for them suffering but also for the family and friends that are left to deal with the pieces.

Gina: Right. They're like well, *well what's gonna come next and how long is mom gonna be able to stay at home and can I keep my husband in our house and, and everybody's different. It, I think that the most challenging thing is that everybody's progression is different.*

Kyle: Genetics are at play in some way. What do we know so far about Alzheimer's and how someone may be predisposed for that?

Gina: Well they believe there's a genetic component to it. But also [what you eat](#), [how well you sleep](#), staying cognitively challenged can really slow the disease if not prevent it. They don't really know what prevents it. But they're really a big component. There's control that we can take to uh, to keep our cognition as good as possible.

Caring for Both Children and Elderly Parents

Kyle: We're talking about Alzheimer's awareness and care. Tim and Gina Murray are the owners of Aware Senior Care in Cary. They're in studio today for Around the Triangle to talk all about awareness of Alzheimer's and dementia. Tim, folks my age, I'm 40. We're part of something that I guess is considered the Sandwich Generation.

Tim: Right.

Kyle: Many of us, I have young kids at home. But I'm also keenly aware of my own parents age as they begin to get a little older and folks in my generation we have kind of two responsibilities, two separate crews to look after? How do you see folks deal with that?

No One Size Fits All for Alzheimer's and Dementia Care

Tim: It's not easy and I echo what Gina is saying. One of the challenges is there is no textbook. *Every case is unique and we're constantly getting surprised by the things that we see.* But for us for you and I'm still getting my arms around by the way being an old guy now and you're saying you're 40.

But it's extremely difficult. It seems like every day we get a note from someone saying *my wife or I've you know or my mom has Alzheimer's and [I'm struggling to know what to do](#).* It's a team sport. You've got two things to take care of. First off, yourself.

You talk about advice or resources or how to deal with this is recognize that it's stressful. There is help out there. But, you got to take care of yourself that old saying about the oxygen mask drops. Put it on yourself first, yes. The second then is, how do I care for my loved one and there's a lot of resources out there and what I ultimately say is build your team. Don't go it alone, but build your team. You know, we're around resources to help you and your loved one.

Caregivers and Support: Use your Resources!

Gina: And your team can be family, it can be friends. *It doesn't have to be paid caregivers.* There's great resources like the [Dementia Alliance](#) that can provide support. So, when we meet with folks, that's what we do.

Who's already on your team? How do they support you? Can they continue that support?

I know we take care of Tim's Mom. We'd rather not have to help her with her personal care. But sure, taking her out and doing things. So find out what they're, what the caregiver is good at and what they can do and then bring in what else you need.

Detecting the Signs of Alzheimer's and Dementia in a Loved One

Kyle: You've been through this on a personal level with family. Walk me through the experience of maybe thinking that something's not quite right with mom or you know, grandma's acting weird. Talk me through the experience though of recognizing that something might not be right to getting that diagnosis. Which I imagine has to be really scary - beginning to plan for the next stages of care and life.

Gina: I love my mother-in-law. *The hardest part about dementia is, when you're around somebody all the time, you don't realize it. The changes are so subtle and you kind of shrug them off like oh that's, that's just mom. Oh, she forgot. Oh, this.*

So, I think I recognized them in Tim's Mom before he did and he said no you're making a big deal out of this. You're making...and I'm like mm-hmm...I'm seeing this, I'm seeing this and you know he, Tim and his brothers are like she's fine, oh she's just being a little dramatic. She's fine. So, it's really tough to look back and go Oh wow, she really does have dementia. There really is something going on and we had to refocus and, and change.

Difficulty in Recognizing Symptoms of Dementia and Alzheimer's

Kyle: So, **what can people do to maybe be more aware of their family members?** Is it, is it a matter of maybe flipping through albums or talking to friends or watching old videos or something to try to gauge how someone has changed? Because you're right. You're, when you're dealing with someone like a parent, especially if you're near them a lot, it's, it's hard to track that, that change.

Gina: I think it's a good idea with the albums. So, with the album I'd go okay, last fourth of July. Wow, you know, Mom organized the whole picnic. She bought the food she knew who was bringing what. And this year, she's no longer shopping. Hmm, she's not really making meals. I didn't realize that. *So, using points of reference when you work together, you know, every birthday she always made the cake. Or Christmas, she always made the dinner.* So, like, oh...

When to Bring in an Senior Care Expert

Kyle: Some of these changes that you talk about, they're very subtle changes that happen to someone over in, in some cases a year time or longer than that. **What's the best way for someone to figure out you know, whether it's, it's time to bring in an expert?**

Gina: I think there's, there's two things you can do. First, when you make an appointment with your primary care provider to ask for a cognitive test and they're very simple they only take a few minutes and even if it's just to get a baseline of their cognitive functioning. And then on our website, we have a [living well at home assessment](#).

Kyle: Okay.

Gina: You can put your informa-, you don't have to put any information in. We will not contact you. But, it asks questions and it kind of paints a picture of what's going on and these would be great questions for you to ask. [You can even bring these questions to the doctor](#). It'd be interesting to have the person who you think has memory issues take, take the assessment for themselves and then their loved one take it. That's where we find the biggest discrepancy.

Tim: Triangulate.

Gina: Yeah. Like, the person says I'm fine I do this. Meanwhile the husband saying no, I actually do all those things.

Kyle: That's just got to be scary though for everybody involved.

Gina: It is, it is. But, it's a starting point.

Tim: Very helpful.

Gina: When you know, then you can move forward.

What's Being Done Right in Alzheimer's Care? What Can Be Done Better?

Kyle: What are some things that are being done right in Alzheimer's care and on the flip side of that what are some things that the folks should be doing differently when it comes to looking after folks with Alzheimer's?

Tim: I think with *some of the things being done right with Alzheimer's is the community*. The nation is doing a terrific job of bringing awareness of dementia and Alzheimer's being the, the largest form of dementia.

What it is, what to look for, how it affects an individual. To give some grace to individuals. It's a, it's not a great disease and it negatively affects the individual where it's not them. So you've got to step back. I know as me as the son to kind of look at my mom and what my mom is and some of these things it's not her fault. So, we're doing a great job and along with that we're doing great research.

But, as you know there's really no magic medications to take that's solves this just yet. We're pouring billions into it. But, there's basic block and tackling, being a Navy guy, that you can do.

Let's take care of yourself as Gina referenced. We're aware that what you put into your body can have a negative effect. So, if you eat well, you sleep well, you take walks every day, you do puzzles. You challenge yourself. These are all good things that could stave off Alzheimer's for quite some time.

So, I think we're doing a great job now with this awareness and guiding people that you can do a lot of things and not magic pills. But, just do a lot of things to live your life better that could stave off this disease.

The Stigma Associated with Alzheimer's and Dementia

Kyle: Gina, you mentioned stigma still associated with it. **Do you feel that people are becoming more tolerant though and understanding about you know the struggle of folks dealing with dementia?**

Gina: I think it's, it's definitely a work in progress *I think there still is some stigma out there and trying to explain.* Making the community aware. Dementia-friendly communities. I think some of the negative things, [*people are burning themselves out*](#). We have found that say the wife has dementia, that the husband ends up working himself into the ground and ends up with a heart attack or a [stroke from the stress of caring](#).

Kyle: That certainly can't help out.

Gina: Right and that's in the same thing with the children they're trying to work. They're trying to take care of their children and then they're running around trying to take care of their parents. So, I think getting, *forming that team earlier rather than later is the best plan.*

What Services Does Aware Senior Care Provide and What Do They Do for Families?

Kyle: It's going back to that Sandwich Generation thing that we talked about earlier. You, you're being pulled in an awful lot of directions here. On that, on that note...you know that's kind of where you found your niche in the business is providing some of these services for folks who are already stretched pretty thin. Take a moment tell me about some of the services that you do provide and how that takes some of the stress off of families.

Gina: So wha-, as an RN, I meet with the family, with the client. We look at their home and I might go in the family, says well I think we just need a couple hours during the day so the daughter can run errands and do X Y & Z. The daughter will say well maybe, maybe you could take Mom out to lunch because I just don't have time for it. So, we talk about things like well how about if we bring a caregiver in who will do the laundry and make the meals and take care of the house while you take mom out to lunch.

So, you can be the daughter again or do, [some families need help overnight](#) because the person with dementia is up wandering around during the night and they're not getting any sleep and the husband and wife are trading off because mom's walking around during the night and we'll say if we [bring in a caregiver in overnight](#), they'll take care of mom. You sleep and then you're ready for the next day. So it's um, it's, it's very different based on what they need.

Alternatives to Home Care

Kyle: It's not gonna be the one-size-fits-all plan for anyone then?

Gina: No. Then we talk to people. *There's great [Adult Day centers](#).* We and we'll recommend that to families, too. The husband and wife are trying to work. The adult day centers um, Ruth Sheets and [Sarah Care](#). I-, they provide socialization.

They can get their medicines there. So, that might be a better thing than say home care, than one-on-one home care. If they're very social, they'll keep them busy. *Their staff is trained with dementia and it's, it's a great alternative, too.*

Kyle: Okay.

A Holistic Approach to Home Care

Tim: I think what separates us and brings us the most joy, it's not about us it's about our clients, our families and *we take that step back and [look holistically](#) and this goes back to the team sport.* And sometimes they, adult day care solves that problem and we're not part of it.

But, we get just as much joy out of helping a family whether we provide the services or a one of our circle of support partners [does]. So, I think that's, that's when, I think that's a differentiator our approach to helping people in the home is we, we look at the bigger picture and it's about building the support that they need. Not necessarily what we can do.

Gina: Right, and it gets to the point with some dementia that really [moving to a community](#) makes far more sense. It's more cost effective than one-on-one care in the home. So, we don't, we don't have any skin in the game. We, you know it's, we refer out. You know, where does this person live? What are the communities that are right there that will keep the loved one close to their family, give them the support they need and everybody, everybody wins that way.

Resources on Aware Senior Care.com

Kyle: I'm gonna ask you in a moment about some of the free resources that are available within the community. But, first for someone who may be looking for a care situation. Where do we go to find out more information about your business?

Tim: Well, the first thing is the, the website we love our, we love the website in that our whole philosophy is education. So, we've made the website an educational process and if you go to

www.awareseniorcare.com. You google awareseniorcare.com, we'll come up, and you'll see in our website.

It talks about us but we talk about why we're in this from the heart and then we say we have this in the middle of the site. I love it. It's like I have no clue when home care is about? [Where do I start?](#) To the expert that okay, [I've researched these options. What makes you different?](#) You know, how do you work with a family. So, we designed it kind of go to left to right so we can guide them. And then we have our circle of support and resources and downloads of all kinds of presentations.

Live well at home, eat well at home, sleep well. So, our philosophy is education and if we help a family and they feel helped, they'll probably call us for service. But, again it's, if we can help, we will. Or else we'll, we'll help them look up with a free resource or one of our partners.

Free Resources for Alzheimer's and Dementia Care in the Triangle

Kyle: Okay, so more information available there. AwareSeniorCare.com. And then how about some free resources available in the community right now? You mentioned some of the day care options. What are some other things that are available?

Gina: Well, I think touching base with the Dementia Alliance [of NC] or Alzheimer's Association.

Kyle: Okay.

Gina: They do, they have respite programs. They have great support groups, um.

Tim: Right, I think the [Dementia Alliance of North Carolina](#), near and dear to our heart. I'm actually on the board there. But, just a wonderful organization and it's a not-for-profit. And they have a whole family support. So, frequently, I had a family reach out the other day going I don't know what to do. Our funds are limited I'm about the end, we need some respite and that was perfect for the Dementia Alliance because they have a family support program. So, if you visit that website, you can put a query and they'll contact you and they'll assess your situation.

Gina: For vouchers for care, so.

Support Groups for Caregivers in North Carolina

Tim: Right, and then the support groups uh, if you do go on our website and you just put in a search in our blog about support groups... we have a listing of all the [triangle support groups](#).

I can't emphasize have enough, it's great because you have a feeling, I don't know who to turn to. I'm stressed out and when you get into the support group, you'll find you're together with people facing the same thing. And you can then, there's, there's power in collaboration.

So, I really recommend you look at a support-, they're in Cary, they're in Raleigh, they're in Durham. They're all over the place with families that have been there, experienced it and again, that helps you build your, your team.

Gina: And there's the [memory cafes](#), also, which are designed for a person with some kind of memory issue and their caregiver and it's, it's dinner. It doesn't cost them anything. It's sponsored by the rotaries.

Tim: Well, right. Every third Tuesday in Cary, for example, at 4:30 is the memory cafe and it's designed for a caregiver and their loved one to come and meet other families have, have some, have a nice little dinner.

And it's sponsored by the five Rotary clubs in Cary and it just shows you the tremendous hearts our, our Raleigh, Cary community has. It's just full of great people doing wonderful things like that, that don't cost you any money.

Gina: Right.

Conclusion

Kyle: So many resources available. Again you can find more information, [AwareSeniorCare.com](#). Tim and Gina Murray, thanks so much for coming in and being a part of around the triangle.

Gina: Thank you for having us.

Tim: Thank you, Kyle. We really appreciate it.

[Around the Triangle – Alzheimer's and Dementia Care](#)