

# Wandering & Dementia

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# What is wandering?

- Getting lost or becoming confused about one's location.
- 6 of 10 people with Alzheimer's wander at least once.
- Wandering is very stressful for both the patient and for caregivers.
- Wandering can be dangerous.



# Who is at risk to wander?

- Everyone with dementia is at risk
  - They don't always recognize familiar places – even their own home.
  - This might cause them to “try to get home” or “go to work” even if they have been long retired.
  - Wandering is dangerous - half of people who wander and are not found within 24 hours will be injured or die.

# Clues that indicate wandering may happen

- “I need to go to work.”
- Restlessness and pacing around.
- Returns from usual walk or drive later than expected.
- Forgets how to get to a familiar place (bathroom may be an issue).
- Tries to “get home” while being in their home (not recognizing home).
- Appears lost in familiar locations – grocery store, friends home, etc.
- More anxious in crowded areas.

# What to do if someone is trying to wander away?

- Don't confront or yell – unless they are in danger.
- Pause and assess.
- What are they trying to do? Go home? Go to work?
- Strategize
  - Can you help me with this first?
  - I was hoping we could have a cup of coffee before you go.
  - Redirect to another activity if possible – use others to help you if available.
  - Use music if possible – it can quickly change a mood.

# Best approaches take DETECTIVE WORK

- Clues to the WHY of wandering –
  - Looking for something familiar.
  - Poor lighting may contribute to unfamiliarity of a room.
  - Boredom - a person may wander because there is nothing to interest them.
  - They can't remember where they were going, so they end up wandering.
  - They may have a hard time remembering to “stay here, I'll be right back.”
  - They may be looking for their “home” but their memory is of their childhood home.
  - The person may be looking for someone from their past – confusing time.
  - Very commonly, they may be trying to keep to an old routine, like going to work.
  - Other WHY's? Is there a specific time – WHEN? And don't forget the HOW.

# CHANGE the WHY and the HOW

- Don't leave the person unsupervised in a new environment
  - Anxiety promotes wandering.
  - Label things in a new setting, bring familiar objects to new place, photos, have a visible clock and put a schedule near the clock. “Joyce arrives at 2 pm”
- Consider scheduled activities – providing structure
  - Cooking together/meal times, puzzles, scrapbooks/photobooks for review, household tasks/cleaning, reading if interested, arts/crafts – hobbies/collections to organize. **MUSIC is a wonderful brain/memory stimulating activity. Make a playlist of music that is meaningful to your person.**
- Include regular physical activities
  - Customize to physical abilities, use music to prompt activity. Safe walking areas.
- Consider a toileting schedule if incontinence might be contributing

# Consider a safety plan in advance

- Keep info about your loved one to help first responders
  - Photo, description, name they like to be called, common areas to walk or drive, details about car, any location devices (safe alert, apple tag, etc.), list of medical issues/medications.
  - Suggest you make a pdf document with this information that can be easily emailed or printed so you can distribute if needed.
- Keep phone numbers for emergency responders available
  - Police, fire dept, nearest emergency rooms.



# Home adaptations can help prevent wandering

- Hidden locks
- Use night lights to help person recognize their surroundings
- Camouflage doors (curtain or a printed screen)
- Warning alarm on door
- Label things in the house – signage (both to redirect as well as a reminder)
- Fencing around yard

# Technology Tools

- Apple air tags
- Medical ID bracelets
  - 24/7 wandering support assistance
  - Name
  - Contact person/phone
  - Medical Conditions – include memory impairment or Alzheimer's Disease
- Alexa Together
  - Monthly subscription, can prompt with set reminders, fall detection, favorite music playlists (quiet playlist at bedtime, etc.), activity tracking, etc.
- Home video cameras

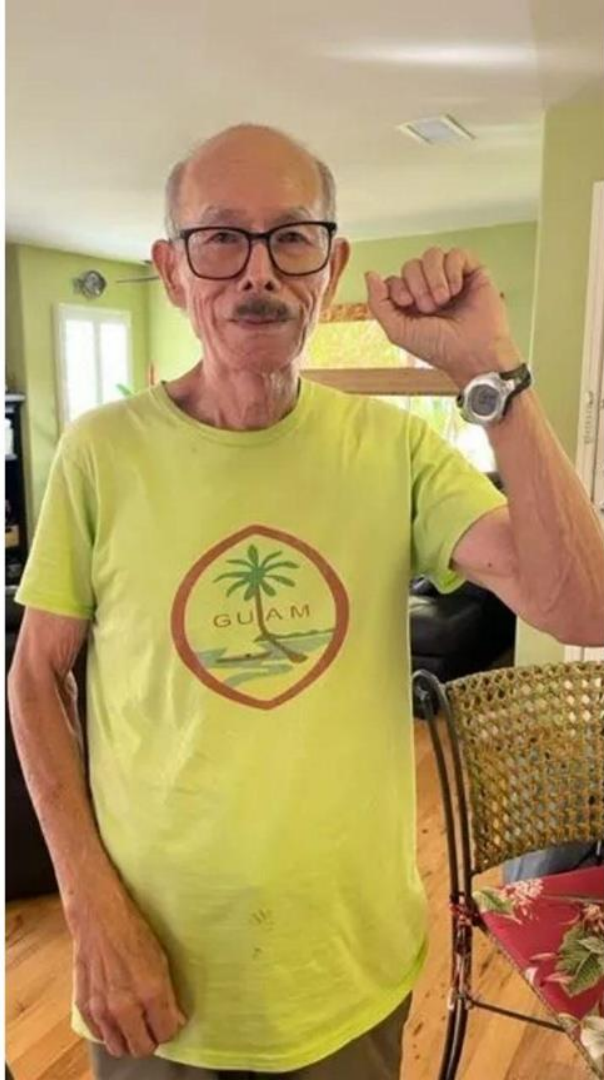
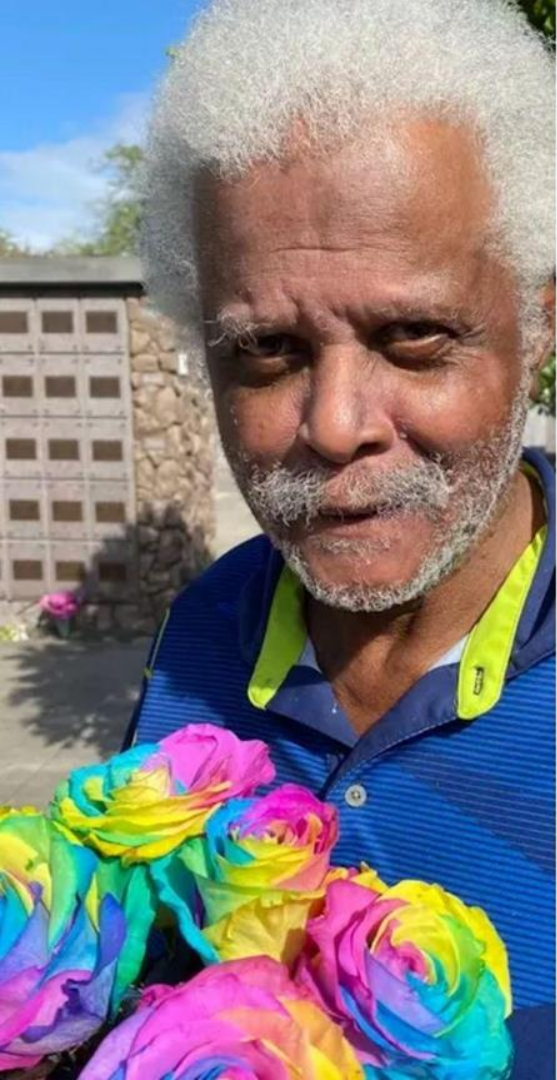
# Let's talk Driving...

- Getting lost or confused while driving is a very serious problem.
- Safety of the person driving AND others.
- While a well practiced skill, there are many ways driving can be unsafe.
  - Impaired visual spatial ability
  - Impaired ability to plan ahead
  - Impaired ability to problem solve (detours, etc.)
  - More easily distracted
  - Feeling lost promotes anxiety and bad choices



# Strategies

- Ride along with the person – do you feel safe?
- Discuss your concerns with them – offer alternatives
- Talk about driving “retirement”
- Work with the person’s doctor – refer to DMV for driving test
- Disable car if all else fails







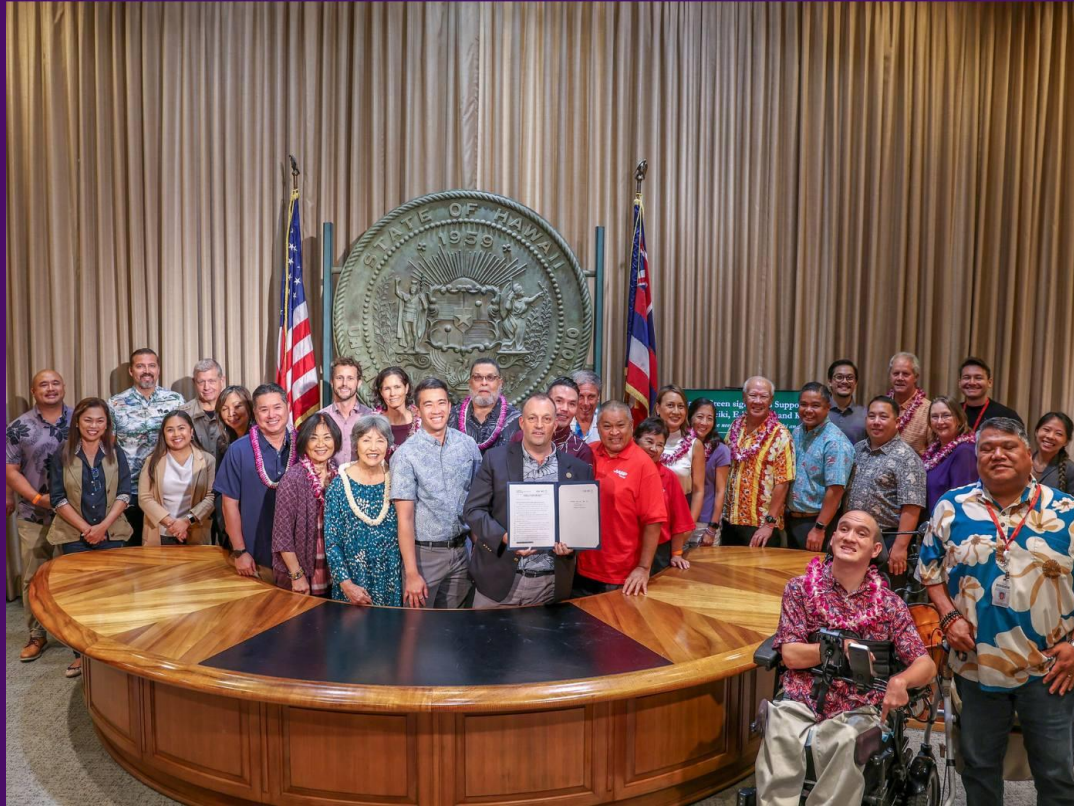
## **SILVER ALERT**

is a public notification system in the United States to broadcast information about missing persons – especially senior citizens with Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or developmental disabilities – in order to aid in locating them.





## SILVER ALERT SIGNED INTO LAW





**The Alzheimer's Association – Hawai'i Chapter**





# **WHAT WE DO**

**Caregiver Support Groups**

**Caregiver Training + Education**

**Care Consultations**

**Online tools and resources**

**24/7 Helpline: 800.272.3900**

# KOKUA

## GET INVOLVED



[ALZ.ORG/ALOHA](https://alz.org/ALOHA)

**WALK  
TO END  
ALZHEIMER'S**  
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION™



[ALZ.ORG/TLD](https://alz.org/TLD)

**THE  
LONGEST  
DAY**  
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION™

**CONNECT  
WITH US**

*We are here to help*

**24/7 Helpline: 800-272-3900**

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