



MEDIA PACKAGE

A Film By



Visionalist
Entertainment Productions



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Keith Famie

248-869-0096 (Office)

248-318-2534 (Cell)

famie@famie.com

New Public Television Documentary “Those on the Front Lines of Alzheimer’s & Dementia” To Be Televised In June

DETROIT- (April 10, 2018) – Award-Winning Producer/Director Keith Famie announces that Detroit Public Television (DPTV) will broadcast his latest 2-hour film “Those on the Front Lines of Alzheimer’s & Dementia” on June 27, 2018 at 9 p.m. on Channel 56 in Detroit. The film is produced by Famie’s Visionalist Entertainment Productions. The broadcast will be hosted by JoAnne Purtan, morning host at WOMC-FM radio and one of Michigan’s most respected broadcast journalists, who recently wrapped up a 20-year tenure with Detroit ABC affiliate WXYZ-TV.

Nearly two years in the making, the documentary features heartfelt stories and leading professionals from around the world sharing the work they are doing to better understand a pathway to help those diagnosed with multiple forms of dementia. The film also explores deeply the value of how the medical community is now embracing the holistic world as we, as a nation, face the fastest and largest aging population of Baby Boomers.

“I am so honored to be working with Keith Famie to help shine a light on a disease that robs too many families of years together and precious memories,” said Purtan. “As I learned early in my career as a health reporter and have confirmed by working on this project, from caregivers to scientists working on cutting edge research, there are so many wonderful people working to help those battling Alzheimer’s. We hope that by sharing their stories, this documentary can provide hope for families facing so much heartache and uncertainty.”

Famie, who lost his father to Alzheimer’s in 2003, always vowed he would one day take on the daunting task of creating a film with the intention of helping society better understand and deal with the very complicated emotional journey anyone goes on with dementia caregivers included.

“We are so honored to have JoAnne as our host for this film, which we know will help so many,” said Famie. “Viewers trust her to bring them stories that impact their lives and this film is designed to touch so many. We anticipate the film will tour many communities as well as air throughout the state of Michigan and, eventually, other major PBS stations around the country.”

“There can be no better use of our documentary programming, than to explain, explore and decode Alzheimer’s disease in a television and digital format that can track the advancement in care and prevention, while also revealing the latest coping strategies to patients and families alike,” said Fred Nahhat, Senior Vice President, Detroit Public Television. “Providing a platform for award-winning filmmakers and journalists like Keith Famie and JoAnne Purtan to examine these issues allows us to provide great storytelling from both a local and national perspective.”

The film’s support comes from many community leaders, including the D. Dan & Betty Kahn Foundation, the Artichoke Garlic Foundation and the Marvin and Betty Danto Foundation.

To learn more about the production, please go to <http://ontodaysfrontlines.com/alzheimers/>

Greater Michigan Chapter

Headquarters:

Metropolitan Detroit
25200 Telegraph Road
Suite 100
Southfield, MI 48033

248 351 0280 p
248 351 0419 f

June 5, 2018

Regional Offices:

Central Michigan
3600 N. Saginaw Road, A
Midland, MI 48640

989 839 9910 p
989 839 5910 f

1125 S. Linden Road
Suite 950
Flint, MI 48532

810 780 4163 p
810 780 4231 f

Northern Michigan
921 W. 11th Street
Suite 1W
Traverse City, MI 49684

231 929 3804 p
231 922 1584 f

Upper Peninsula
309 S. Front Street
Suite 233
Marquette, MI 49855

906 228 3910 p
906 228 2455 f

West Michigan
2944 Fuller Avenue, NE
Suite 101
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

616 459 4558 p
616 459 8874 f

To Whom It May Concern:

Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia can be daunting. It can also be difficult for those struggling with the disease to know what to do or where to turn for resources and information.

In his film, *On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's and Dementia*, Keith Famie and his team help to bring the intricacies of this disease into focus. Mr. Famie has managed to capture some of the brightest minds, strongest stories and best resources from across the State of Michigan, and the country, within his two-hour film. Through interviews with local experts such as the Alzheimer's Association – Greater Michigan Chapter to the work of occupational therapist, Teepa Snow, to the Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center, this film takes the viewer on a journey that explores the science of the disease as well as how to continue to truly continue to *live* with this disease.

This film has been a fantastic contribution to the scope of Alzheimer's and dementia and we appreciate being included as such a prominent piece in telling this story.

Sincerely,


Jennifer Lepard
President and CEO



June 6, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

As the number of baby boomers who turn the corner on 65 increases, so does the potential for more and more cases of various forms of dementia. As more and more of us live into our 80s and 90s the number of situations where boomers are being asked to care for someone living with dementia increases. As those of us who live with multiple chronic health conditions increases, due to medical advances in care and management, so to do greater risks for developing dementia.

On the Front Lines of Alzheimers and Dementia Care, Keith Famie does what is so needed for this topic. He goes beyond what is currently happening for families and in households across the nation, in fact the world, and explores what is currently possible and what the future holds as possibilities. Keith took the time and provided the multi-lens foci required to appreciate this incredibly challenging life condition in order to provide what all too many of us will need in order to address the tsunami of dementia in our lives and communities.

In this two-hour documentary, Keith has woven the experiences and efforts to provide care and support to people who are living with dementia into a larger fabric. He explores which programs offer current best practice and which are investigating beyond current boundaries to identify what might delay symptoms, reduce risk, improve or sustain abilities, and perhaps eventually prevent dementia from occurring or slow its progression.

By reaching across the spectrum of personal and family experiences, to clinicians and programs that serve and support people living with dementia and their care partners, to researchers in various fields of health promotion and disease prevention, Keith and the Visionalist team have provided something unique and vital to our community.

Keith is a treasure and a chef beyond food. He has pulled together a number of ingredients to create this menu. His documentary goes beyond the routine sad and bad story of Alzheimers caregiving to offer possibilities and to share out varied perspective and beliefs. His skills at creating something special are well established and he has certainly offered the viewing public something more than gloom and doom, while still including the hurt and pain that are part and parcel of this Front-Line experience!

The fact that as part of the premiere, Keith and his team of producers created a T-Shirt that emblazoned with *Respect My Dementia*, says a great deal. This is no longer a condition that can or should be hidden away. This documentary offers a different view into life with this condition and what can be done and possibly should be done for individuals, families, service providers, and communities to address the topic, rather than pray it doesn't happen to me or mine or wish it away. It's time to take action and Keith has provided details on some of the first steps in what to do and why to do it to reduce your own personal risk, and to seek help, if you are already in the world of life with dementia!

It was my honor and privilege to work with Keith and the participants and families of the Brown Center to make elements of documentary available!

With much respect and appreciation,
Teepa Snow, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA
CEO, Master Trainer and Consultant,
Positive Approach to Care

Positive Approach, LLC
www.teepasnow.com

• P.O. Box 430 Efland, NC 27243 • 877-877-1671 • info@teepasnow.com •

DBusiness Daily News / Annual 2017 / Local Filmmaker Keith Famie Launches Trailer for Alzheimer's Documentary

Local Filmmaker Keith Famie Launches Trailer for Alzheimer's Documentary

BY STEPHANIE SHENOUDA

Published: Thursday, May 11, 2017



After losing his father to Alzheimer's, local filmmaker Keith Famie knew he wanted to dedicate time to delve deeply into the disease. He recently launched the first trailer for his 12-part documentary, "On the Front Lines of Today's Aging Issues," which he plans to create over the next few years.

The first in the series, "On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's," will focus on neuroscientists, clinicians, and doctors from around the world

who are working to combat Alzheimer's and dementia-related diseases and the modifying strategies they're currently working on. The film will also detail the history of Alzheimer's, and provide information regarding high-risk populations, current medications, and global resources that are currently available to Alzheimer's patients and their families.

"My father, a World War II hero and dad of three, suffered such a destiny," says Famie. "When he took his last breath with me holding his hand totally not knowing who I was as I sat at his bedside, I vowed to one day do what I could as a filmmaker to help shed a light on what families can do and how we all can better live a life to avoid as much as possible, such a fate. The time is now."

The film currently has support from the Alzheimer's Association, Henry Ford Health System, the University of Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center, the Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology, Central Michigan University, and the McKnight Brain Institute at the University of Florida.

Famie is also currently working with Dr. Richard S. Isaacson, director at the Alzheimer's Prevention Clinic and the Neurology Residency Training Program at Weill Cornell Medical College, who will be filming for the documentary in New York City. Famie is currently signing up sponsors for the film, as well.

The trailer can be viewed [here](#).

IN RELATED NEWS, Famie was nominated for the 2017 Michigan EMMY Awards for a film about mental health he directed, "Death is Not the Answer," which encourages viewers to rethink mental health issues through personal stories. The film was produced by Detroit Public Television and Visionalist Entertainment Productions in Wixom.

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NOVEMBER 23, 2017
GROSSE POINTE, MICHIGAN

Complete news coverage of all the Pointes

On the front lines Filmmaker examines Alzheimer's, dementia

By Jody McVeigh
Editor

Producer/Director Keith Famie recently set his sights on Grosse Pointe while filming his upcoming documentary, "On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's & Dementia."

The film is set for release next spring, but Famie will present an extended trailer during a private screening event 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 6, at The War Memorial, 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pointe Farms. The event is sponsored by The Family Center, in partnership with The War Memorial, Grosse Pointe News and Pointe Magazine.

Famie, who has completed several series on topics ranging from veterans to women and aging, decided to focus a series on aging in general. With his "On the Front Lines" series, he plans to tackle issues such as poverty, drug abuse, cancer and others, but wanted to kick off the series with a look at Alzheimer's and dementia, "because I lost my father in 2003 to Alzheimer's," he said. "I'm glad I chose it, especially after talking with people for several months for this film. It's probably the No. 1 fear of most people — losing their cognitive sharpness, being a burden to their family. Clearly this is the big dog in the room when it comes to aging — losing one's sense of who we are."

Famie, 57, said most people age 40 and over know someone who has experienced some form of dementia.

"They've seen that chalkboard slowly erased, their existence fading away," he said. "It's frustrating, tormenting, embarrassing. They're robbed of their dignity."

Famie said the point of his film is not to "tell an old story new." Rather, he wants people to understand what strides have been made and what is being done about dementia. The film covers five dementias, including Alzheimer's, as well as

what it's like to have the disease, what it's like to be a caregiver, caregiving strategies, how cognitive decline takes place and more.

"How do we stack the deck as an aging population?" he asked. "What can we do collectively to find that sense of discipline, combined with education and new research, to live longer, healthier, cognitive lives?" "The aging person today is not the aging population of the Greatest Generation," he continued. "Baby boomers approach the aging process a little different. They're not staying with the status quo. They're approaching dying differently. They're questioning everything and that's pushing research and new ideas."

Famie said the film features ways people are getting active to prevent the onset of dementia, including through different types of yoga, music and other methods. During his Nov. 7 visit to Grosse Pointe, he stopped by the home of Denise Robison Mullen, 78, who is learning to play the banjo for the first time, in an attempt to stave off dementia.

"We've found learning to play a new instrument

skills. She just wants to play for her grandchildren — and maybe one day with Steve Martin — and hopes the newly acquired skill will benefit her health.

"Denise is all attitude," Famie said. "She has a great attitude about life. She exudes this ability to look at life with a wonderful attitude."

Famie also visited the Grosse Pointe Senior Men's choir practice to film a spot about socialization — another key to good health.

"That's why I want to feature men singing, not because they're fabulous singers — although they are impressive — but that they get together," Famie said. "We know men suck at aging. We work our asses off, then we become older, children leave the home and we find ourselves with just our mate and very little friendships that we've forged. We find ourselves lonely and tired and in some cases financially stricken individuals. The highest rate of suicide is among men age 55 and older."

"The senior choir is just an opportunity for men who are 70, 80, 90 years old to get together," he continued. "I asked them why they do it and they say they like the



Famie watches as Hewitt captures a shot of the

is incredibly complicated," Famie said. "As we age, our synapses are dying off. One of the fastest ways to create new synapses isn't doing a crossword puzzle every day; it's forcing the brain to do something it's never done before."

Mullen, who lost her husband of 44 years to Alzheimer's, isn't looking to hop onstage to show off her banjo-playing

camaraderie, they like the guys. They have a joie de vivre attitude about depth of life. You see the sparkle in their eye. I would say if they were not a part of the Senior Men's choir, they would not have it."

Famie's stop in Grosse Pointe is just a fraction of what the film explores. He continues to travel the state and the country to gather material for "On



PHOTOS BY RENEE LANDUYT

From left, Cinematographer Kevin Hewitt, Producer/Director Keith Famie, Associate Producer James Sauod and Associate Producer Kim Brown prepare to film student Denise Mullen and teacher Levi Hensen.

the Front Lines," which he plans to premier next spring at The War Memorial, with a performance by the Senior Men's choir.

In advance of the premier, he hopes the community gets a taste for what's to come at the screening event.

"It's a 24-minute trailer; it will be a two-hour film," he said. "People will walk away inspired, educated, touched. Many will ask how they can adopt what they've learned into their life. With cognitive decline, you need to do something 10 years before there's a symptom. This is all out assault on cognitive decline. I want people to take away from this to do the work now. Eat better now. Exercise now. Socialize now. I hope there's a sense of urgency that comes out of this film."

"I want the Grosse Pointe community to understand what we're doing and the significance of this film," he continued. "I love the fact I know what we do helps people. We're doing it so people understand. This is the most gratifying thing I've done in my life."

The Dec. 6 event also features resource tables, courtesy of The Family Center, which has been serving the community 17 years.

"The topic fits our mission well of serving our community through programs and resources vital to today's families," said Debbie Liedel, executive director of The Family Center. "Building a strong support system

is critical and that's what The Family Center can do best: help those in need of resources and referrals confidently find valuable information and trusted professionals."

After 10 years as director of The Family Center, Liedel said she too is leaning on its services.

"I never expected to need its services," she said. "My 92-year-old mother is challenged

Center is here to help," Liedel said. "Call us at (313) 447-1374, email us at info@familycenterweb.org or visit our website at familycenterweb.org for articles, videos and referrals through our Association of Professionals. Supported solely by community contributions, our matching gift opportunity has been extended through Dec. 31."



PHOTO BY RENEE LANDUYT

Denise Mullen is interviewed by Keith Famie as Associate Producer James Sauod stands by.

with dementia. Her memory, dignity and skills decline more each day. The path traveled in caring for a loved one is heart-wrenching, stressful and a mystery at times for the caregiver.

"This is why The Family Center takes great efforts in providing information through our prevention services," she continued. "Being prepared helps to navigate the road ahead more successfully and to ease some of the stress faced in caring for a loved one."

Registration for the Dec. 6 event is available online at warmemorial.org/familycenter. The community is welcome, but registration is required.

"Know The Family

The Details

Who: Producer/Director Keith Famie, The Family Center, The War Memorial, Grosse Pointe News, Pointe Magazine.

What: "On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's & Dementia" extended documentary trailer.

Where: The War Memorial, 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pointe Farms.

When: 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 6.

Why: This gathering will give the community an opportunity to learn about the film and offer their support.

Info: Register at warmemorial.org/familycenter or call (313) 881-7511.

The Family Center
Resources for Families, Individuals and Professionals

Keith Famie: Alzheimer's disease just doesn't give a damn who you are

Dan Dean, hometownlife.com | Published 6:44 a.m. ET Jan. 15, 2018

Keith Famie has taken many journeys in life. The documentary producer has traveled the world with his own celebrity chef television programs, appeared on "[Survivor: The Australian Outback](#)" and owned top-rated restaurants in metro Detroit. But it was dealing with his dad's dementia that altered his life course.

"Alzheimer's doesn't care who you are ... just does not give a damn," Famie said from the office of his production company, Visionalist Entertainment Productions, in Novi.

Visitors entering the VEP office are greeted with a visual record of Famie's vast travels. A cooking photo from a Maasai village in Kenya on 9/11 in one corner. Numerous framed photos showing him with the likes of President George H.W. Bush and Steven Spielberg from his Food Network days adorn a wall in another corner. In between, photos and memorabilia honoring World War II veterans featured in the documentary "Detroit: Our Greatest Generation" form a prominent display.

But tucked into a cupboard above his computer is a special black box. Adorned with images of his dad, it holds his father's ashes and is a constant reminder of the most challenging journey of the 57-year-old Novi resident's life.



Keith Famie poses in his office with the ashes and photos of his dad who died from Alzheimer's. (Photo: Dan Dean | Hometownlife.com)

"Until you've had a loved one living with Alzheimer's, or a friend, do you really understand the journey they are going to go on or the journey you're going to go on?" Famie said. "It's as hard on the caregiver as it is for patients."

When his dad died in 2003 from complications associated with Alzheimer's he started to question what he was doing, who he was doing it for and who gains from it all. That experience led to him hanging up his apron to become a documentary filmmaker.

Vested interest

"I was tired of everything being about me ... I just wanted to live life differently ... I wanted to tell other people's stories, I wanted to do documentaries," he said.

Famie's latest project hits close to home. ["On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's & Dementia"](#) will air in the spring on Detroit Public Television.

"I lost somebody – I have a vested interest in this story," he said. "I always vowed to one day do what I could to help families facing the same fate.

"When my dad died, I made a conscious decision to make a documentary on Alzheimer's ... as we did the series on aging ... It was only a matter of time," he said.



A display of World War II memorabilia from the documentary "Detroit the Greatest Generation," includes his dad's "Fly Boys" cap and other items. (Photo: Dan Dean | [Hometownlife.com](#))

Between the photos and memorabilia on a wall directly in front of his desk a large dry erase board is a constant reminder to the breadth of the story he has set out to tell. The history of Alzheimer's; what new facilities are adding to treatment; what a doctor tells a new patient; what is memory? The list goes on and keeps growing as Famie learns of new leads.

When Bill Gates announced late last year that he was donating \$50 million to Alzheimer's research an article was posted on the white board and Famie started to call on contacts in an attempt to get Gates to appear on camera.

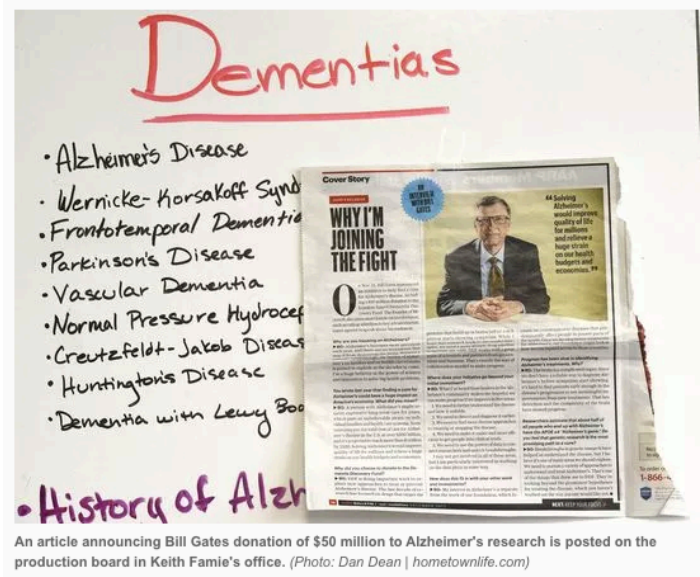
Famie's goal is to open a window into dementia. Get people talking about the sixth leading cause of death in America so we can get beyond it being thought of just a disease people get when they get old. A large part of the film is dedicated to new research that is showing the disease can be prevented or slowed.

"So now, there is a way to try and stack the deck in your favor or your loved one's favor for the clearest, healthiest, cognitive aging journey that you can go on," Famie said.

We can control how we age

"(Dad) was smarter than most, but he didn't know how to live, he didn't know how to age," Famie said. "One thing that I have learned over the years is how we live today will determine how we age tomorrow and that is just as simple as it can be."

It is a common theme in "On the Front Lines." Segments of the film will show tai chi classes, ballroom dancing, yoga and community center activities along with interviews with experts from the University of Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center, Henry Ford Hospital, Wayne State University and the Alzheimer's Association.



An article announcing Bill Gates donation of \$50 million to Alzheimer's research is posted on the production board in Keith Famie's office. (Photo: Dan Dean | [hometownlife.com](#))

Interspersed will be real stories on the front lines like that of my dad, who was filmed for the documentary after battling scammers for over three years. All these story lines are meant to be weaved together attempting to inform and change the mindset that Alzheimer's and dementia do not have to be a common part of aging.

"As human beings, we make a lot of excuses," Famie said. "We're lazy. I am speaking for myself. We're always, like, 'It will happen tomorrow.' 'I will take care of it later,'" he said. But, he explains, later is now and one of the most important things we need to find inside ourselves is discipline.

"We have been given a plethora of information – it comes at us in all stages every day," he said. "Don't do this, do that, drink this, don't drink this, eat more of this, do more exercise. It's there. We can discern commonsense stuff — it's how much of it do we apply to our own lives?"



A photo in his office shows Keith Famie with movie producer Steven Spielberg. (Photo: Dan Dean | hometownlife.com)

"I think you have to dig down deep a lot of times and just say, 'Hey, if I am not going to do this for myself, let me just do it for the loved ones around me.' To help them, as I age, to not have to take care of me," he added.

"I think that is a real concern for ... the baby boomers who are aging now – it is like a tsunami," he said. "Never before in history have we had so many people aging simultaneously. A lot of baby boomers are concerned over whether the millennials will be there to take care of them. It is a good serious question, a very serious question: 'Will they be there? Will they be as caring, as empathetic and as concerning as we were, as we are, for the Greatest Generation?'"

"We as a society, we can all work together to navigate through these waters of aging and, hopefully, the documentary will help people."

For more about "On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's and Dementia" visit [Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.](#) or Facebook [@FrontLinesofAlzheimers](#)

Dan Dean is managing editor of hometownlife.com. His dad deals with dementia and will be featured in Famie's



(Photo: Dan Dean)

upcoming documentary. Email him at ddean@hometownlife.com Follow him on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter @HTLEditor](#).



Keith Famie holds a photo of he and his dad. (Photo: Dan Dean | hometownlife.com)

Dan Dean

Managing Editor, Observer & Eccentric Media

Those On The Front Lines Of Alzheimer's & Dementia



The dementia crisis: Telling the most important story of this decade



"Alzheimer's does not care who you are ... it just does not give a damn." – Keith Famie
When Famie stated those words, as a journalist, I rejoiced about having a great quote. But as one of the caregivers for my dad living with dementia, I understood the anger and truth behind those words.

I first met Famie when he reached out to me after I wrote a column about dealing with my dad and dementia. My parents took care of their bodies most of their adult life. They ate healthy, exercised – having a wall full of Senior Olympics medals as proof – took supplements and today, at ages 85 and 86, they are in great physical condition. Most people are shocked to discover they take no medications. Unfortunately, their brain health is failing them. I believe we recognized quite early that Famie and I were telling a story few want to hear. Famie invited me along as he filmed and interviewed various subjects for his documentary "On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's & Dementia." He even invited us to share our story for his film.

I entered this journey with my two sisters after happening upon a pile of checks my dad had written to sweepstakes companies. When we asked about the checks, we discovered dad was responding because he thought the sweepstakes were his actual investments. It was shocking.

Dad loved investing. It was his daily hobby and, not only was he very good at it, he was super cautious and careful. Yet, with dementia, dad was doing something previously unthinkable. At the time, we were lost. Having a parent with dementia is overwhelming and I shared my experience in hopes of reaching others in the same situation. Meeting Famie was a godsend. Not only was I blessed to witness his compassionate storytelling, I was learning a lot about a disease that was a complete mystery to me. When we discovered the sweepstakes checks in fall 2015, my mom complained about dad's short-term memory and how he repeated sentences. But we were shocked at the extent of his memory loss and confusion. Mom shopped daily at the local grocery store, took aerobics classes and made meals. Today, she can no longer drive to the store, she cannot operate the stove or microwave and she does not recognize the home she has lived in for more than 20 years.

Dementia takes once reasonable and rational humans of all colors and ethnicities, whether they are short, tall, thin, overweight, wealthy, poor, male or female, and it steals from them the ability to function. As a society, we value independence above all else, but this disease creates a stigma and those living with dementia can be embarrassed that they need help. Many refuse help at all.



Telling the story of Alzheimer's and dementia is far from sexy, but it might be one of the most important of this decade. Famie calls it a tsunami. Teepa Snow, a widely sought out expert on dementia care, will tell you the crisis has arrived. The Alzheimer's Association estimates the personal toll currently reaches an estimated 15 million Americans providing unpaid care for someone with dementia and the economic impact is more than \$259 billion for the disease from which one in three seniors will die. When he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 1994, former President Ronald Reagan went public with his journey. At the time, there was little known or written about the disease. And while he helped shine a light on Alzheimer's for the first time, sadly, 18 years later, the public discussion is almost non-existent about a disease that has become the sixth leading cause of death in America.



Dementia just does not give a damn. But Keith Famie does care.

Thank you, Keith, your crew and all those featured in this documentary. Your courage is inspiring.

Dan Dean, Managing Editor for Observer & Eccentric Media.

OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC
hometownlife



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SUBURBAN LIFE

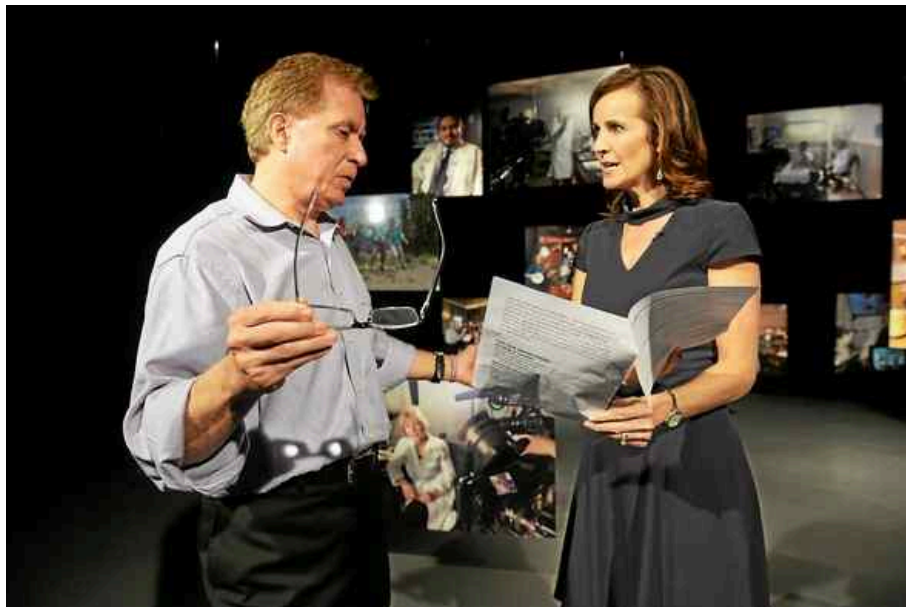
Oakland County man memorializes father in documentary about Alzheimer's

By **Sharon Longman**, *The Oakland Press*

POSTED: 05/30/18, 11:43 AM EDT

UPDATED: 1 DAY AGO

0 COMMENTS



Joanne Purtan will emcee the premiere of Keith Famie's documentary "On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's and Dementia." Photo from Facebook

The premiere of Keith Famie's Visionalist Entertainment Productions new Public Television Documentary "On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's and Dementia," emceed by Joanne Purtan, is at 5:30 p.m. Sunday, June 3, at the Royal Oak Music Theater, 318 W. Fourth St.

The film features heartfelt stories and leading professionals from around the world sharing the work they are doing to better understand a pathway to help those diagnosed with multiple forms of dementia and the people who care for them.

Famie lost his World War II veteran father to Alzheimer's in 2003 and vowed he would one day create a film with the intention of helping society better understand and deal with it. For more information, call 248-869-0096 and visit <http://ontodayfrontlines.com/alzheimers>.

JoAnne Purtan to host dementia documentary by Keith Famie on DPTV in June

Hometown Life Published 10:50 p.m. ET April 16, 2018



After his dad died from Alzheimer's, he vowed to do something to help others facing dementia. In June the public will be able to witness the two-year project award-winning producer/director Keith Famie has put together documenting the story of Alzheimer's and dementia.

"Those on the Front Lines of Alzheimer's & Dementia" will air 9 p.m. June 27 on Detroit Public Television (DPTV) Channel 56 in Detroit. The film is produced by Famie's Visionalist Entertainment Productions. The broadcast will be hosted by JoAnne Purtan, morning host at WOMC-FM radio and one of Michigan's most respected broadcast journalists, who recently wrapped up a 20-year tenure with Detroit ABC affiliate WXYZ-TV.

The documentary features stories and leading professionals from around the world, including [Teepa Snow](#), sharing the work they are doing to better understand a pathway to help those diagnosed with multiple forms of dementia. The film also explores deeply the value of how the medical community is now embracing the holistic world as we, as a nation, face the fastest and largest aging population of Baby Boomers.

"I am so honored to be working with Keith Famie to help shine a light on a disease that robs too many families of years together and precious memories," Purtan said. "As I learned early in my career as a health reporter and have confirmed by working on this project, from caregivers to scientists working on cutting edge research, there are so many wonderful people working to help those battling Alzheimer's. We hope that by sharing their stories, this documentary can provide hope for families facing so much heartache and uncertainty."

Famie, who lost his father to Alzheimer's in 2003, always vowed he would one day take on the daunting task of creating a film with the intention of helping society better understand and deal with the very complicated emotional journey anyone goes on with dementia caregivers included.



Keith Famie during filming at the Fred Astaire Dance Studio in Bloomfield Hills. (Photo: Dan Dean | hometownlife.com)

“We are so honored to have JoAnne as our host for this film, which we know will help so many, Famie said. “Viewers trust her to bring them stories that impact their lives and this film is designed to touch so many. We anticipate the film will tour many communities as well as air throughout the state of Michigan and, eventually, other major PBS stations around the country.”

“There can be no better use of our documentary programming, than to explain, explore and decode Alzheimer’s disease in a television and digital format that can track the advancement in care and prevention, while also revealing the latest coping strategies to patients and families alike,” said Fred Nahhat, Senior Vice President, Detroit Public Television. “Providing a platform for award-winning filmmakers and journalists like Keith Famie and JoAnne Purtan to examine these issues allows us to provide great storytelling from both a local and national perspective.”

The film’s support comes from many community leaders, including the D. Dan & Betty Kahn Foundation and the Artichoke Garlic Foundation.

To learn more about the production, please go to:
www.ontodayfrontlines.com/alzheimers

Reluctant rock star: Teepa Snow rises above in worldwide dementia care advocacy

Dan Dean, hometownlife.com



Two by two, eight caregivers and the loved ones with dementia they care for are greeted by a 63-year-old bundle of energy named Teepa Snow.

Her long, gray locks bounce about her lime green, button-down logo shirt as she excitedly dances, sings and does whatever she can to meet each patient where he or she is at.

While strategically holding both hands of Farmington Hills resident Bob King, Snow breaks out in song.

"When the red, red robin, comes bob, bob bobbin' along ..."

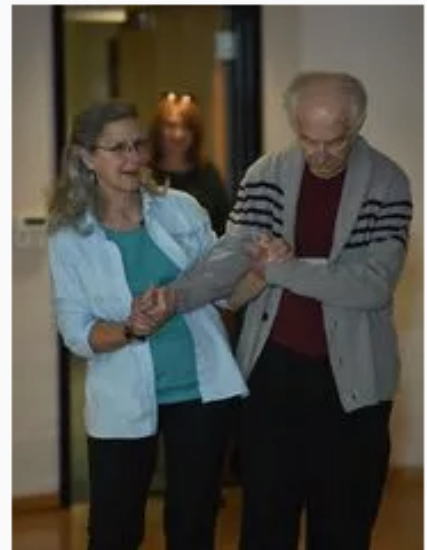
King, dressed in a gray cardigan sweater that matches his full head of hair, does not respond to Snow's prompts to have him finish lines of the song. Instead he shuffle-walks with his head tilted to the floor into the activity room of the Brown Center on the campus of the Jewish Community Center, where Snow is giving a care-partner training seminar.

"There'll be no more sobbing, when he starts throbbing, his own sweet song ..."

King suffers from Lewy body disease and his wife, Claudine Heldt-King, is his care-partner. They are typical American baby boomers whose lives have been thrown into upheaval by the onset of dementia, a disease the Alzheimer's Association estimates will kill one in three seniors.

What do they have left to give?

Snow is an advocate for those living with dementia and has made it her personal mission to help families and professionals better understand how it feels to live with the associated challenges. Her techniques center around understanding we are dealing with people whose brains are dying, but instead of focusing on what they can no longer do, she chooses to understand what they have left to give.



Teepa Snow greets Bob King who has Lewy body disease at the Brown Center singing his favorite song "When the Red, Red Robin." (Photo: Dan Dean | hometownlife.com)

"If all you are doing is wanting back what you can't have, how well are you caring for that which is present?" she asks the group. "What do you see in the person in front of you that gives you a sense of purpose and value ... and 'why do I keep doing this?' Unless we can find something we like, it is real hard to do the job of care support."

At the Brown Center, love seats and armchairs are arranged in a semicircle, with Snow moving about answering questions and demonstrating techniques. Film producer Keith Famie is filming the entire thing for his documentary "On the Front Lines of Alzheimer's & Dementia" and included in the group are my sister and dad.

"When it comes to dementia, it is always the relationship that should be coming first, not the outcome of a particular encounter," Snow explains to the group.

I know from experience how frustrating it is to communicate with someone who has dementia from caring for my dad. Snow uses an example of getting a patient out of their chair. She explains that asking two or three times and then eventually raising your voice is a useless tactic, but an easy road to go down when you don't know better.

"The thing that doesn't change in the brain of someone who is with dementia is the ability to remember negative emotions," she said. "What they don't remember is what we did to cause them. What they will remember is, 'I didn't like that.' So the next time you make the mistake of leaning over and saying, 'stand up!' somebody might say, 'go to hell.' One of the very last skills people lose is the ability to swear or say ugly things ... then the only way they have to express they don't like what you are doing is to hit you.



Teepa Snow demonstrates techniques to help get a person standing with Rhea Brody who has frontotemporal dementia. (Photo: Dan Dean | hometownlife.com)

"When you feel the urge to shove your hand at someone – that is called care-giving," she added. "So what we want to do is say, 'hey' (she waves and holds out her hand as if to shake hands) and offer your hand. That is called care-partnering, because what I did first was get connected, before I tried to do anything. The most important thing is the relationship of the moment."

Caring for others started early in life

Snow's approach is curated from more than 40 years of experience using compassion and knowledge. She first helped care for a dementia patient when her grandfather moved into the family home when she was age 8. As a teen, she became a nursing assistant, then she went on to Duke University and, with an undergrad degree, started working various related jobs.

Snow became part of the first graduating class with a master's in occupational therapy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She started Positive Approach, LLC, in 2005, offering education to family and professional care-partners all over the world.



What she brings to dementia care is lacking during what is considered by most dementia experts as a national and worldwide crisis. Her techniques are widely sought after, but she is one of a very few dealing with care knowledge and training while communicating on a relationship level patients can understand.

The reality is that Alzheimer's and dementia have no cure. It is a fatal disease that comes with a huge expense, not only financially, but from a quality-of-life perspective for both the care provider and patient.

"We are in the crisis. It has arrived, we just have not realized it," she said. "It's scary that I am the big fish in the pond. ... But if I go over to England, they will say, 'You are like a rock star in dementia.'"

"Do you know how crazy this is that we don't have more rock stars in dementia? It is just not OK," she added.

Where is the plan?

"We are where we were with cancer 25 years ago or where we are today with autism, depression, bipolar disease," she said. "It is the same kind of idea. People are still way, way back.

"People keep wanting to wish it away — 'Well, if we find the cure.' Well, what are you going to do until then?" she said. "Family member after family member needs help. People are still isolated, they feel there is still a huge stigma. There is this thought that when people get dementia, their brain stops. Well no, it doesn't. So we better figure out what they can still do, because that is what's going to get them in trouble ... combined with what they can't do."

Snow is not shy about talking about the lack of a unified plan to deal with the crisis, whether from a national or state legislative point of view, lack of training in the medical field and training requirements in care facilities, not to mention citizens caring for loved ones.

"There needs to be requirements," she said. "The U.S. is supposed to have some kind of a plan. We don't have a plan. We really don't. All states are supposed to have a plan. Even states don't have a really consistent plan.

"If we don't make that a norm, then how are we going to change anything?" she added.

A dementia plan for Michigan was outlined in 2003 and later updated in 2011 by a team co-chaired by Judith Heidebrink, director of the Michigan Department of Community Health, and Peter A. Lichtenberg, director of the Institute of Gerontology and the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute at Wayne State University.

The Michigan Dementia Coalition set out to update the plan with these goals: increase in support for family caregivers; best practices in dementia detection, assessment and care management; advocate for dementia-friendly policies and promote highest quality care standards in long-term care; and increase early intervention and support by promoting public awareness.

"The Michigan Dementia Coalition made many contributions across the state in helping persons with dementia, their families and those who care for them," Lichtenberg wrote in an email. "We need a renewed commitment to that type of statewide effort by our Legislature."

The work is continuous with a goal of getting the state Legislature to buy in to the 2018 state plan and provide resources to fund its goals and objectives, Lichtenberg noted. Changing the culture is a slow process. It is why what Snow is doing is important. In addition, the work of Famie and his documentary are going to go a long way in bringing this unrecognized, unwanted, but very devastating crisis in front of an audience that may or may not ever need the information. But the odds are overwhelming that if you are a baby boomer today or the child of a baby boomer, you will have a personal encounter with dementia.

Those are odds that eight care-givers gathered in a small activity room one Friday afternoon in West Bloomfield know all too well.

"Wake up, wake up, you sleepy head

"Get up, get up, get out of bed,

"Cheer up, cheer up the sun is red,

"Live, love, laugh and be happy ..."

Dan Dean is managing editor for Observer & Eccentric Media and hometownlife.com. He writes an occasional column on dealing with dementia. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram @htleditor.

