

PAULA ANDERSON FOUNDER

My father, Vic Johnston, was diagnosed with cardio-vascular dementia in 2000. I was living in Boston at the time and my dad was in CA. Dementia was very new to me, so I volunteered at an assisted living two mornings a week to learn more about the disease and how to be with the people who had it.

After moving to Havasu we brought my dad over and placed him in an assisted living private home. We had to move him 3 times to find a place where he was happy and safe. I soon realized that the employees of the assisted living were not educated in the area of dementia. I started support groups in Lake Havasu City through the Alzheimer's Association to help myself and others understand our journey.

Employees of one of the larger assisted living and I would host the Alzheimer's Walk in November. A couple of my friends had registered to walk in honor of their mothers. As they were walking by, they asked me why I didn't join the Havasu Community Health Foundation and work through them to improve the understanding and support of those affected by dementia. In 2007, the Alzheimer's/Dementia Connection was founded. The name changed to Dementia Connection of Havasu and remains that today.

The rest is history, this wonderful organization continues on today offering support groups and education to Lake Havasu City and the surrounding areas. Support and quality help and education are just a click or phone call away. The more you know about the disease and behaviors of the person you know with dementia, the better your journey will be. You will meet others on the same journey – you won't feel alone.

In 2018, I retired and moved to Summerlin, NV, and began volunteering for Lou Ruvo Brain Center. I so enjoyed doing outreach and visiting with people and answering questions. Dementia care is a passion of mine. After a while, a position to facilitate a peer-lead zoom support group came up and I was delighted to be chosen to fill the position.

I have been truly blessed to have been a part of the formation and implementation of Dementia Connection – my love of seniors (of which I am now) continues as I continue my work on the dementia journey.

