

Alzheimer's caregivers invited to free training conference

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FSU's program for Alzheimer's caregivers aims to reduce caregivers' distress; improve their overall health; and enhance their skills. (Photo: ThitareeSarmkasat, Getty Images/iStockphoto)

For too many African-Americans, caring for a loved one with dementia can be a hard road. Coming soon in Tallahassee is a conference designed to celebrate the work of these caregivers and offer new ideas and support – for them as well as for elder care professionals, future caregivers and other interested community members.

The African-American Alzheimer's Caregiver Training Conference is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. June 29 at the Old West Enrichment Center in Tallahassee. The free Saturday conference will include presentations, breakout groups, and caregiver and community resource panel discussions. Respite care will be provided by Elder Day Stay, part of Elder Care Services. Lunch will be free.

"Our hope is that caregivers will leave this conference feeling empowered and appreciated," said organizer Tomeka Norton-Brown, coordinator of the ACTS 2 Project (African-American Alzheimer's Caregiver Training and Support), based at the Florida State University College of Medicine. "We've lined up speakers who will provide valuable insights on caring for their family members and caring for themselves."

The keynote speaker is Soheyla Mahdavian, an associate pharmacy professor at Florida A&M University, who will present a caregiver's guide to the prevention and treatment of dementia. She has worked with adults with dementia and caregivers for 10 years in the Tallahassee area. As a board-certified geriatric pharmacist, her early work focused on helping people experiencing memory difficulties. She currently works with people with late-stage dementia who require behavioral and medication-related assessment.

Also scheduled to speak are the Rev. Lonnie Wesley III, former caregiver and current pastor of Greater Little Rock Baptist Church in Pensacola, and Tallahassee estate planning attorney Jami Coleman.

"This is the first of what we hope will be annual conferences," said Lisa Bretz, executive director of Advantage Aging Solutions, one of the conference's sponsors. "The need for culturally sensitive caregiver training is a major goal of Florida's Area Agencies on Aging."

Other conference sponsors are ACTS 2, Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare Memory Disorder Clinic, and the North and Central Florida Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Partnership.

To register, visit https://www.acts2project.org/06_19_Conference.html or call toll-free 866-778-2724.