

Local resident to be featured in CNN documentary



Jordan Culver, Tallahassee Democrat 6:39 p.m. EDT September 18, 2014



(Photo: Glenn Beil/Tallahassee Democrat)

Since being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease four years ago, Alexander "Sandy" Halperin has been an advocate for those living and working with the illness, and has created his own research fund to battle the disease.

He's taking his awareness efforts a step further this weekend with the release of a documentary two years in the making.

Halperin and his family will be featured in a CNN series tracking the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. Halperin was diagnosed with Alzheimer's when he was 60 years old. The series, called "Sandy's Story," airs beginning this weekend and will document the impact Alzheimer's disease has had on Halperin's life.

Dr. Sanjay Gupta and a team of CNN journalists, led by producer Stephanie Smith, began following Halperin, now 64, in April 2012, according to CNN officials. The first chapter of the series was released Friday on CNN.com and will air on the cable television network this weekend. The project is being released in chapters, which will ultimately accumulate to form a documentary.

"Sandy's Story" will be released during episodes of "Sanjay Gupta, M.D.," which airs Saturdays at 4:30 p.m. and Sundays at 7:30 p.m. CNN's coverage of Halperin also included an in-depth story documenting Sandy's day-to-day life, including how he handles conversations when he sometimes forgets how they began.

The story also focuses on memories Halperin holds on to, despite battling Alzheimer's.

Karen Halperin Cyphers, Halperin's daughter, said Alzheimer's is a disease that impacts the people surrounding the diagnosed person.

"It's our hope that sharing my dad's story will help others who are diagnosed with this insidious disease, and will also encourage lawmakers and researchers to continue to dedicate more resources toward finding treatments and cures," she said in a news release.

More than 500,000 Floridians live with Alzheimer's disease today. Halperin said in February his family and his dedication to raising awareness for the Alzheimer's are the two things that are most important to him right now.

"This is my time, I feel from my inner being, to help others," he said before a benefit concert at The Moon. "I've done it my entire life, but now in this chapter of my life, I've dedicated it — besides my family being first — wholly to what I can do next to help on the local and national level with Alzheimer's."

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