

My name is Luba Routsong, I am a retired school counselor and a resident of Colchester. I'm here to share the importance of the Adult Day program and to ask you to please fund their budget request.

My husband has Alzheimer's. It is a disease that robs him of heart, soul, and body, a disease of perpetual loss. Over the last four years I have created social engagement opportunities, enhanced my own abilities to care for him through classes and support groups, and been his primary caregiver. This is very, very hard work and as his Alzheimer's progresses it becomes more and more challenging for me. Vermont is woefully lacking in support for those caring for a loved one with dementia.

When my husband was diagnosed four years ago, I put his name on the waitlist to attend the Adult Day program in South Burlington. At that time there were more than 150 people on the waiting list. I continued to check back, each time a little more desperate. Finally, after waiting more than 2 ½ years, a space became available for Tom to attend one day a week. I was thrilled. We have now secured him a place three days a week and this is allowing him to remain home with me for the time being.

I cannot stress strongly enough the importance of respite and the value of the Adult Day program for Tom and I. He is safe, fed, and cared for. Social engagement is one of the most important interventions that may slow the progression of dementia. The staff is trained to provide appropriate social interaction. The staff helped us arrange for the SSTA bus that provides transportation. Tom returns home after his time there sharing information about his friends and how they spent their day. I do not believe Tom, would get the same level of attention, activity and socialization if he was at home being cared for by a private pay individual. The Adult Day program is his community, and I could go on and on about the positive impact this has had on both of us.

Not long ago Tom fell and broke some ribs. He had to go to Elderwood for two weeks for rehab. I was petrified he would lose his spot at the Adult Day program, but they

reassured me they were holding his place. I was relieved. Then I learned they did not receive any payment for the days Tom was in rehab and this really upset me.

Our goal is to keep Tom at home for as long as possible as long as we both are safe. I really believe Adult Day has helped us accomplish that. Please do all you can to keep opportunities like these available for the more than 13,000 Vermonters over the age of 65 with dementia and for their family caregivers. Please do not cut any service that allows someone with dementia to remain at home with their family. I ask you to support the budget request from the Adult Day providers to ensure they remain an option for me and others into the future.

Thank you.