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## **Visiting Angels and Alzheimer's Foundation of America Join Forces to Improve Quality of Life for Dementia Sufferers and Their Families**

HAVERTOWN, Pa.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Nov. 15, 2004--

National Senior Homecare Company Will Offer AFA-Endorsed Training and Qualification Program to Caregivers Nationwide

Visiting Angels, a leading senior homecare franchise, announced today that it has become the first national non-medical senior homecare provider in North America to offer an Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA)-sponsored formal training and qualification program for those who care for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related illnesses. It is part of a collaborative relationship formed by Visiting Angels and the AFA to enhance the quality of life for individuals with Alzheimer's and related dementias, and their families.

It is estimated that five million Americans currently suffer from Alzheimer's disease, and that the brain disorder will strike as many as 16 million Americans by mid-century, according to the AFA. The plight of the late President Ronald Reagan, who suffered from Alzheimer's for more than a decade, served to increase awareness of the disease and the toll it takes on both individuals and their families.

AFA is offering its training program through Dementia Care Professionals of America (DCPA), AFA's new membership division for healthcare professionals that was introduced this fall.

The DVD-based training program, which includes a beginning and a more advanced series, is designed to educate all levels of healthcare professionals about the brain disorder and how to provide safe and effective care for individuals affected by it. Topics include understanding Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, principles of basic care, and managing activities of daily living and behavioral problems. The series was developed by Richard E. Powers, M.D., Chief of the Bureau of Geriatric Psychiatry at the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, and a member of AFA's board of trustees.

Upon completing the AFA-sponsored training program, Visiting Angels caregivers will be eligible to take a qualification exam through DCPA and earn designation as an AFA Qualified Dementia Care Provider or an AFA Qualified Dementia Care Specialist. AFA reviewed and sanctioned the qualification standards.

"This new training and qualification opportunity fills a tremendous need. I get a lot of calls from families who need respite care for someone with Alzheimer's, and this means I can provide caregivers for them who truly understand that they're dealing with," said Meg Beresik, owner of a Visiting Angels franchise in Bay Head, NJ.

Beresik knows from personal experience how important it is for the families of individuals suffering from Alzheimer's to have access to trained caregivers. In June of 2001, Beresik's mother was diagnosed with the disease. Beresik lived 40 minutes away from her mother and was a working parent with two young children. She found it so difficult to find qualified caregivers for her parent that she was inspired to leave her former career as a technical writer to open a Visiting Angels franchise.

Taking care of clients with Alzheimer's is very different from taking care of any other client, according to Visiting Angels CEO Larry Meigs.

"Individuals may have differing degrees of dementia, from forgetfulness and mood swings to the very real danger of their suddenly walking out of the house," he says. "That's why it's so important for caregivers to have comprehensive training covering all stages of dementia."

Eric J. Hall, AFA's chief executive officer, praised Visiting Angels for stepping up to provide DCPA training to its healthcare professionals. "As the incidence of Alzheimer's disease continues to increase, it is critical that organizations recognize the importance of setting high quality standards for healthcare providers. These efforts will go a long way toward providing optimal care to those in need," Hall said.

Having access to caregivers trained in caring for individuals with Alzheimer's will provide much-needed respite to their families, who are often juggling many responsibilities, as was the case with Beresik. She herself had to balance a job and caring for young children with responding to her mother's increasing dementia.

In addition, some Alzheimer's sufferers are being cared for by spouses of similar age who may have health issues of their own.

"They're not young anymore, they are experiencing interrupted sleep, and they are afraid to leave their spouse alone. As a result, they don't go to their own doctors' appointments--which is a recipe for disaster," says Beresik. "By establishing a relationship with a professional caregiver trained in caring for individuals with Alzheimer's, family members have a 'safety net.'"

Visiting Angels' franchisees provide a range of helpful services to seniors, including light housework, assistance in personal hygiene, meal preparation, shopping and companionship. Nationwide, there are over 200 Visiting Angels franchises, with more to open during 2004.

AFA, headquartered in New York, NY, is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to advocate for "care in addition to cure" on the national front, and to collaborate on innovative, hands-on support services to individuals affected by dementia, and their caregivers and families. AFA unites member organizations in nearly all 50 states. For more information about AFA, call 866-AFA-8484 or visit [www.alzfdn.org](http://www.alzfdn.org). To learn more about DCPA, visit [www.careprofessionals.org](http://www.careprofessionals.org).

"As the number of Alzheimer's sufferers continues to grow, so will the need for qualified caregivers," says Meigs. "That's why we formed this partnership with the AFA to offer this specialized Alzheimer's training and qualification to our franchisees and caregivers nationwide."

For more information about Visiting Angels and the company's decision to offer Alzheimer's training, contact Renee Roznatoski at 610-642-8253, or [renee@gregoryfca.com](mailto:renee@gregoryfca.com).

#### About Visiting Angels

Visiting Angels is the nation's leading franchisor of at-home assisted living services for seniors. Nationwide, the demand for non-medical senior homecare is at an all-time high, as Americans age and more elderly are living on their own. Founded in 1998, and based in Havertown, PA, Visiting Angels provides a range of helpful services, including basic chores, personal hygiene, meal preparation, shopping and companionship, as well as providing a respite for family caregivers. Please visit [www.visitingangels.com](http://www.visitingangels.com).

For more information about Visiting Angels, contact Renee Roznatoski at (610) 642-8253 or [renee@gregoryfca.com](mailto:renee@gregoryfca.com).

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