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Alexander Support Fund Benefits Communication Sciences and Disorders

Family makes gift to honor of late loved one, enhance dementia services

OCTOBER 24, 2020 BY MEAGHAN FLORES

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The family of the late Doug Alexander gathers on the University of Mississippi campus with representatives from the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders to celebrate a recent gift from the family to the department. They are (from left) Peter Grandjean, dean of the UM School of Applied Sciences; family members Captain Alexander, Kristina Carlson, Elisabeth Alexander and Tanner Johnson; Vishakha Rawool, chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders; and William Fisher, development officer for the School of Applied Sciences. The department's hospitality room is being renamed as the G. Douglass Alexander Memory Cafe for individuals living with dementia. Photo by Kirsten Faulkner/UM Office of Development

OXFORD, Miss. – When Doug Alexander was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia in 2018, he was determined to do all that he could to stay healthy and help others who had similar diseases.

Now, a generous gift established by his family – wife, Kristina Carlson; daughter, Elisabeth Alexander; son, Captain Alexander; and grandson, Tanner Johnson, all of Oxford – has honored his wish to help those affected by dementia by establishing the G. Douglass Alexander Support Fund to benefit the **Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders** at the **University of Mississippi**.

Lewy body dementia is a progressive dementia that causes individuals to decline over time in their ability to function independently. Some significant difficulties associated with LBD include hallucinations, delusions, short-term memory loss, challenges to clear and logical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Within the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, the **University of Mississippi Speech and Hearing Clinic** provides dementia clients with screenings as well as comprehensive assessments not only to document memory issues, but also to provide insights about personalized interventions to benefit each client. Alexander began participating in cognitive therapy at the clinic in July 2018.

"This donation is a great incentive for the communication sciences and disorders department to improve our services to individuals with memory issues and their caregivers," said Vishakha Rawool, UM chair and professor of communication and speech disorders. "It also strengthens our commitment to improve the quality of life of individuals with dementia."

The gift will fund improvements to the department's hospitality room, which will be renamed the G. Douglass Alexander Hospitality Room, establishing it as a memory cafe.

Memory cafes, also called Alzheimer's cafes, are typically designed to provide a caring and stigma-free social environment for people living with dementia and their family members, friends and professional

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Campus Briefs

Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation's capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to

caregivers. Memory cafes have potential to decrease the social isolation that can often accompany clients with dementia.

"Our Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders is in a unique position to enhance the cafe concept by seamlessly integrating speech-language therapy to improve both cognitive and social communication of individuals with dementia," Rawool said.

"In addition, this will be an excellent opportunity for graduate students enrolled in the communication sciences and disorders master's degree program to design unique therapeutic approaches within the memory cafe environment and practice implementing these approaches while meeting the needs of each individual."

The other half of the family's gift will provide funds to improve the physical environment of the clinic by adding furniture to more easily accommodate the physical needs of older adults and allow easier implementation of disinfection protocols.

There is no cure for LBD; however, cognitive therapies can help patients maintain cognitive function for a longer period of time. The goal of speech-language services is to improve the quality of life of patients with dementia.

Elizabeth Burklow, a UM speech-language pathologist, began working with Alexander in 2018. She also supervised graduate students, and together they all sought to ensure Alexander was receiving the therapy needed to continue to enjoy his everyday life.

"Doug's personal goals were to stay active, mentally and physically, for as long as possible, and to remain an active member of his family and community," Burklow said.

"We worked on using environmental cues, such as calendars, clocks and windows, to stay oriented to the time of day, and we also worked on strategies to remember what had been said in conversation or what had happened in a movie or book, so he could enjoy his favorite everyday activities."

Alexander completed daily homework outside the clinic to keep his brain active each day.

"Doug had a great sense of humor and a natural ability to put people at ease and make someone feel welcome," Burklow said. "Doug was more than a client. He was also my friend."

Alexander graduated from Oglethorpe University in 1968 with a bachelor's degree in business and earned a master's degree in business from Georgia State University, but he was an Ole Miss fan at heart. Until his health prevented it, he attended every Ole Miss football game, home and away.

After battling LBD for several years, Alexander died in April 2020.

"Doug was very open about his disease, educating people on Lewy body dementia whenever he could," Carlson said. "His passion for education is why we feel it is so important to ensure that everyone in the region knows not only about Lewy body dementia but also about the wonderful work being done at the Speech and Hearing Clinic."

To contribute to the G. Douglass Alexander Fund, send a check, with the fund noted in the memo line, to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655; or online at <https://give.olemiss.edu/>. For more information on supporting the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, contact William Fisher, development officer, at wjfisher@olemiss.edu or 662-915-2293.

For more information about the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, visit <https://csd.olemiss.edu/>.

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