

N.J. Alzheimer's Chapter Breaks With Federation

By MELANIE GRAYCE WEST

The Greater New Jersey chapter of the Alzheimer's Association has broken from the national parent organization, following similar moves by New York City and two California chapters, amid a reorganization that aims to centralize some 80 community-based chapters into a single, legal entity.

"We were really worried about the impact on autonomy and how that would affect the community and the type of programming we can provide to people in New Jersey," said Russell Rothman, the vice chairman of Alzheimer's New Jersey, formerly known as the Greater New Jersey Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.

The defections, which highlight decade-old tensions, began last month with the New York City chapter and continued on Friday with the Greater New Jersey chapter. Earlier this month, the Orange County and San Diego chapters in California disaffiliated.

The four chapters were among those with the greatest assets and annual income. Each has changed its name.

Chapter leaders of the charities said the decision to break from the Chicago-based national office was driven by the need to preserve locally raised dollars and a desire to provide personal, hands-on support and programming for caregivers and people with Alzheimer's disease.

Chapters contribute 40 cents of every \$1 in unrestricted donations to the national office.

Over the past several years, the national leadership of the Alzheimer's Association has rolled out a strategic plan designed to advance the organization's common goals and unify its programming, said Stewart Putnam, chairman of the national board of directors for the Alzheimer's Association.

In addition to the plan, national leaders decided to abandon a federation or umbrella-style organization—with each chapter its own independent legal organization—in favor of one national group. Local

chapters would come under the national office's financial structure, and local boards would move from fiduciary and oversight responsibilities into an advisory capacity.

Some 50 remaining independent chapters have until Jan. 15 to decide whether to join or stay independent.

Until the past year, the Orange County chapter didn't question the structure of the organization and had a strong working relationship with the national staff, said Mike Lancaster, Orange County's board chairman.

"But when it was then said, like a bulldozer, you will now be rolled into one organization," he said, "our board felt very strongly that the community would be served in better fashion on our own."

Stephen Casper, a co-chairman of the New York City chapter, said his organization was "best off" as a separate organization.

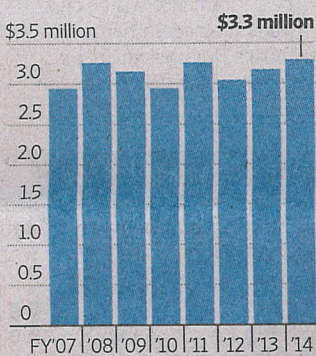
The Alzheimer's Association "brand is not unimportant, but not all-important either," he said.

Mr. Putnam said the defections by the chapters weren't entirely unexpected.

"I continue to believe that the vast majority of chapters and people involved in the organization will end up being excited about working together in a more unified fashion to deal with the issues that the disease is presenting us," said Mr. Putnam.

Local Funding

Revenue raised by the Greater New Jersey chapter of the Alzheimer's Association



Note: Fiscal year ends in June 30.

Sources: Guidestar; Internal Revenue Service filings

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.