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Helping her community learn about ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE



Licet Valois

BY JESSICA LYONS

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A native of Colombia who moved to the United States in 1997, Elmhurst resident Licet Valois is now dedicating her time to helping members of the community, particularly the Latino community, learn about Alzheimer's disease and what services are available to them.

When Valois first came to New York, it was because she had been awarded a track and field scholarship to attend the New York Institute of Technology. She received a degree in clinical counseling from the school, as well as a degree in social work from Hunter College and a post-graduate certificate in aging and mental health from the Brookdale Center on Aging.

Last August, Valois was named the Latino Outreach Manager for the Alzheimer's Association's New York City Chapter, after having been a consultant with them for five years. Working in all five boroughs, Valois provides outreach to make people more aware of what Alzheimer's disease is and what services are available to them through the Alzheimer's Association.

"The Alzheimer's Association is the largest not-for-profit organization in the country serving people with any type of dementia so it was the best fit for me," said Valois, who has been working in this area for several years. "I'm able to do a little bit of everything."

Lou-Ellen Barken, the President and CEO of the association, said, "Licet is a vital addition to our community. Her considerable experience in geriatric social work, her compassionate nature, and her ability to do direct outreach to the Hispanic community will enable many families to get the help, support, and guidance they need."

According to the association's website, "Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, degenerative disease that attacks the

brain, causing impaired memory, thinking and behavior." The association provides numerous services, such as support groups, educational meetings, care consultation, outreach, public policy and advocacy, and training, among others.

"My goals are to reach out to as many Hispanics as possible...to educate them about the Alzheimer's Association and the disease," Valois said. "I hope to be able to reach as many people as possible just to guide them to the path to get services."

Valois said that, since she was little, she always felt a special connection with seniors. After completing her undergraduate studies, she said she knew she wanted to work with that particular population and eventually started working with those who have memory impairment.

"The fact that I have impacted their lives is so rewarding at the end of the day," Valois said. "People are very grateful and that makes me feel good."

Valois is also a member of several organizations, including the National Association of Social Workers, the American Aging Society and the New York Mental Health Association. She is also a board member of the Latino Alzheimer's Coalition of New York.

One source of inspiration for Valois has been her parents. She said that her mother was always helping others and set an example for Valois to do the same. Another source of inspiration is the population that she serves through her work.

My inspiration is just to impact the life of seniors," she said. "I feel that they have done so much in life. My inspiration is just to make sure that I can give something to someone's life, just to help them with the quality of their life."

For more information on the Alzheimer's Association's New York City Chapter and the services it provides, visit www.alznyc.org or contact Valois at 646-744-2949.

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