

There are times in life that force us to stop, breathe, and face what's coming whether we like it or not. October 30th always reminds me of that moment in my family's life. That date is my father's birthday. He was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's in his late 50s, although he quietly struggled with it for years prior. That diagnosis catapulted my family and me into a caregiving journey that was excruciating, soulful, and necessary.

My father, David Ethridge, was equal parts stoic and goofy with an unbeatable work ethic, an endless supply of witty quips, and a heart for his family. He looked almost identical to Christopher Reeves and acted like Superman as a father of two daughters, husband of more than 30 years, and a sharp owner of an accounting firm. Beyond the dementia, he led an otherwise healthy, active life.

For nearly a decade, my mother, my sister, a woman named Deneisha who over the years became my sister, and I navigated the life of caregivers. Despite the fact that more than 53 million Americans serve as family caregivers, the resources that should have been available to my family **simply did not exist**.

As we struggled to find help and care that prioritized dignity, humanity, and quality of life, my experience led me to become a Rosalynn Carter Mental Health Journalism Fellow at The Carter Center, and to the work of the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers (RCI). I learned my family's caregiving journey was not unlike Mrs. Carter's, who cared for her own father until his passing. It was through the lens of her experience as a caregiver and mental health advocate that she founded RCI more than 35 years ago to ensure that caregivers like us were supported early and often.

On the cusp of National Family Caregivers Month, and in honor of what would have been my dad's 69th birthday, my family's foundation will be matching gifts made to RCI between October 30 and November 30 of up to \$10,000. That means any gifts made will be doubled, furthering the impact of RCI and honoring the legacy of caregivers like Mrs. Carter.

Because of those years with my dad, we are committed to making the caregiving experience better for others. We hope you'll join us in that endeavor by supporting RCI this season.

With Gratitude,

Christie Ethridge Diez & the Board of  
The David W. Ethridge Foundation  
for Caregivers