The Wisconsin Alzheimer’s Institute (WAI) was established in 1998 as a center within the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (UWSMPH). The original concept for the WAI came from a coalition of service providers, community-based organizations, educational institutions and advocates organized by the Wisconsin Bureau on Aging and Long-Term Care Resources and the Helen Bader Foundation in Milwaukee. These original efforts have made the WAI a public/private partnership with a vision of collaboration with state and local partners to provide service, outreach, education and research that improve the lives of the people of Wisconsin.

The Alzheimer’s & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin is a nonprofit organization that is specifically designed to provide a link to resources for people with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementias. We are also deeply concerned with providing support to those who care for persons with dementia. Our mission is to help caregivers take care of themselves as well as provide a quality life for the person with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia. The Alliance provides information and resources regarding Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias and offers many programs and services on an ongoing basis.

New Friends Program

A companionship program for health profession students (medical, nursing, social work, occupational and physical therapies, etc.) and persons with mild cognitive, Alzheimer’s disease or related dementias
Program Overview
New Friends is a program that brings together health professional students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and individuals with mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer’s disease or related dementias to meet one-to-one on an informal basis outside of the clinical setting.

Through shared activities and conversations, New Friends provides an opportunity for students to learn from the person with mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer’s disease or related dementias and their family as they share their experiences with dementia. It also provides an opportunity for the person and their family to voice concerns regarding their care and contribute to the training of future physicians.

Time Commitment
Once a match has been made, the student and the person with mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer’s disease or related dementias agree to commit 2 to 4 hours each month, for at least a school semester, in shared activities with one another (see suggestions). In addition, participants come together for an introduction meeting and a wrap-up meeting at the beginning and end of each semester.

Activities
Meetings and shared activities will be determined by the community mentor and the student. Students are responsible for setting up the meetings/activities.

Any expenses for the activities are the responsibility of each participant. However, if this is a hardship for the student, special arrangements can be made for assistance by contacting Pat Wilson at the Alzheimer’s & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin.

Suggested Activities
• Go for coffee
• See a movie
• Bake bread, cookies, or make a meal
• Work on a craft together
• Share a hobby
• Play games
• Attend a concert
• Visit a museum
• Go to the farmer’s market
• Take a walk
• Visit over shared photographs
• Volunteer together

Transportation
Each participant is responsible for his/her own transportation to and from the activity.

Who Can Participate
Health profession students currently enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This includes medical, nursing, social work, occupational and physical therapies, etc.

Persons with mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer’s disease or related dementias.

For More Information
Persons with mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer’s disease or related dementias should contact:

Pat Wilson, Alzheimer’s & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin
608-232-3406
patricia.wilson@alzwisc.org

Health professional students should contact:
Heidi Pophal, Wisconsin Alzheimer’s Institute, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health
608-829-3312
hpophal@wisc.edu

Applications to participate will be considered throughout the year. The program begins at the start of each semester and ends at the end of the semester. Participants are encouraged to continue their friendship for as long as they are able beyond this timeframe.