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# Ridgefield Lawyer Helps Families for Alzheimer's Awareness Month

A Ridgefield lawyer wants families to know how to plan ahead should they find someone in their family diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

By Wendy Ann Mitchell, Patch Contributor | Nov 9, 2017 10:55 pm ET

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RIDGEFIELD, CT — November is National Alzheimer's Awareness Month, an annual campaign to increase awareness of the disease, and one local attorney wants people and families to know what they may need, in a financial and legal sense, should they find themselves diagnosed with the disease that impacts many seniors.

According to the [Alzheimer's Association](#), there are more than 5 million Americans (one in ten over age 65) living with Alzheimer's and by 2050 the number could be 16 million. The website states that Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S. with one in three seniors dying with some form of Alzheimer's or other dementia. It kills more than breast cancer and prostate cancer combined, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

[John Sweeney](#), a Ridgefield attorney, said one must have their financial and legal affairs in order so decisions can be made for the patient and help can be provided. In most instances, the burden falls on the spouse or children, Sweeney said.

One local family whose parent was recently diagnosed contacted his firm, [Sweeney Legal](#), after their father's diagnosis. His client said that their father no longer able to live on his own after his wife passed away and they wanted to understand what their options were before they had to move him into a facility.

"Alzheimer's is difficult on everyone, including the parent and the family," Sweeney said. "The family will have to step and plan for the short and long term."

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Sweeney reviewed the numbers on the finances with the family, considered Medicare and other resources, explored home care and the help they would need. In addition to a Revocable Trust, Sweeney updated his Will, Healthcare Proxy, and Power of Attorney. "While their father was in pretty good shape now, Alzheimer's is a progressive disease. With a Healthcare Proxy and a Power of Attorney, you can often manage the affairs of a person with Alzheimer's and avoid a conservatorship," Sweeney stated.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, "Making legal plans in advance is important for several reasons: Early planning allows the person with dementia to be involved and express his or her wishes for future care and decisions. This eliminates guesswork for families, and allows for the person with dementia to designate decision makers on his or her behalf. Early planning also allows time to work through the complex legal and financial issues that are involved in long-term care."

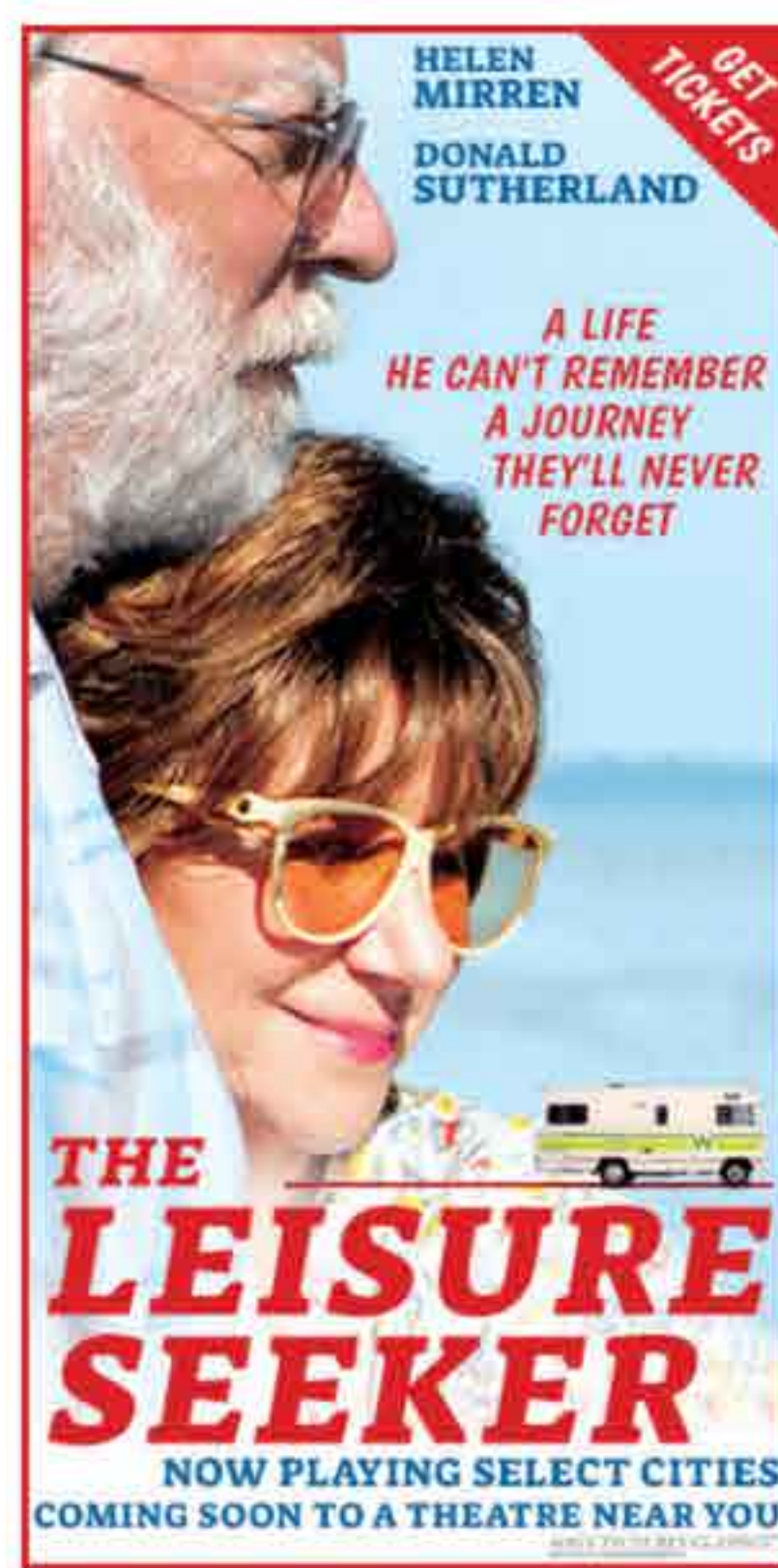
They go on to point out, "Legal planning should include: making plans for health care and long-term care, making plans for finances and property, and naming another person to make decisions on behalf of the person with dementia. You can complete certain legal documents without a lawyer, but getting legal advice and services from an attorney who specializes in elder law can be especially helpful."

For help with a family member with Alzheimer's, dementia and other elder care law issues, visit [LegalSweeney.com](#), contact John Sweeney at (203) 261-6877 or email [sweeneylegal@gmail.com](mailto:sweeneylegal@gmail.com).

Image by Alzheimer's Association via Flickr Creative Commons

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