

Meet Our Volunteers | Lorraine Ujifusa



“My grandmother had Alzheimer’s disease (AD). My mother had it, too, and each of her seven brothers and sisters had it. I’m an only child, and I moved my mother from California to Las Vegas so I could better care for her,” says Lorraine Ujifusa.

Mrs. Ujifusa lost her mother to AD in 2005, before the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health opened. “I wish the center, with its programming for caregivers, had been here when I needed it,” she laments. “A friend gave me a book about caring for someone with Alzheimer’s called *The 36-Hour Day*. It was all I had for support, and I hung on every word. If the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health had been around, I could have met other caregivers, received the support and advice I needed,” she says.

However, Ms. Ujifusa literally got in at the ground floor, attending the center’s groundbreaking ceremony on February 9, 2007. When asked why she was so committed to the center’s development and to securing a volunteer opportunity upon its opening in 2009, she says, “Being here is a way of giving back. And besides, who knows when I myself will need to access the center’s services.”

Mrs. Ujifusa enjoyed a rewarding career managing property and storage facilities until she quit in 2002 to care for her mother.

She was fortunate that her mother recognized her through her final days and remained upbeat. “She loved music and dancing right to the end,” Mrs. Ujifusa remembers.

Based on her experience with her mother, whose mental acuity declined rapidly following her retirement, Mrs. Ujifusa espouses the philosophy of YOU doctor Mehmet Oz, MD, which is to keep the mind active. She participates in the Red Hat Society; the Caring Connection, which assists people returning home from the hospital; the woman’s club in her Los Prados community and volunteers at the Lou Ruvo Center with her neighbor, Ruth Rogers.

When asked what advice she would like to share with other caregivers, Mrs. Ujifusa says, “Don’t disagree with your loved one. Seek advice on how to deal with it.”