

Giving a Hand to Our Helping Hands!

AFTD Support Group Facilitator: Mark Allshouse

Mark Allshouse, facilitator of AFTD's men's caregiver phone support group, first learned about FTD and AFTD during a graduate school internship. Since becoming an AFTD volunteer in 2013, he has also been personally affected, losing a friend to FTD. Mark shared his volunteer experiences as an AFTD support group facilitator with us recently:

Why did you want to volunteer with AFTD as a support group facilitator?

FTD is such a devastating illness and so hard on the caregivers. If, as a facilitator, I can do anything to help them take care of themselves, then it's worth doing. In my group, I try to create a safe and supportive place where caregivers can find answers, solve problems, share frustrations, talk through day-to-day experiences.

How has your experience been so far as a phone support group leader?

The guys in the group bring their unique experiences every month and share them with people they barely know. They discuss emotional pain and frustration, the satisfaction of solving a problem, the joy of a good day and a willingness to take time to listen and share their knowledge and experiences. Every single one of them amazes me with their ability to cope with one of the most devastating experiences anyone can ever have. And they find time to help others through the same experience. I feel privileged to be allowed to be part of the group.

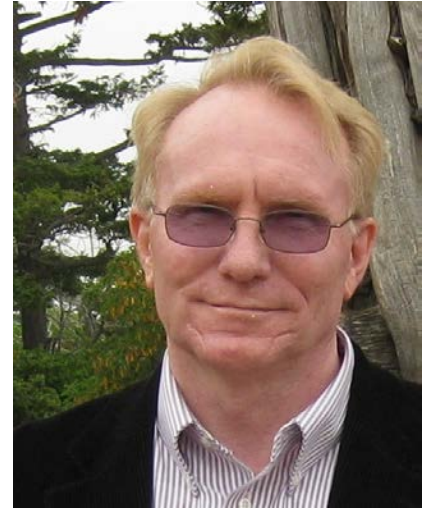
What have you learned from the experience so far?

Facilitating a support group is a constant learning experience. I get great suggestions from the guys about how to run it better all the time. There can be, and I believe there is in our group, a sense of belonging and understanding that's an important part of sustaining yourself as a successful caregiver.

What would you say to people considering volunteering with AFTD?

DO IT! There are just so many ways you can help out. Find what suits you best and get involved. I can't imagine anything more rewarding.

AFTD's Support Services Manager, Bridget Moran, added: "Mark's insights have been invaluable to the men's caregiver support group. I am so grateful to Mark and know those in his group are benefiting from his professional background, personal passion and deep commitment." There is space available for new members to join Mark's group. If you are interested in learning more, contact Kerri Barthel Keane at kbarthel@theaftd.org.



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