

# Giving a Hand to Our Helping Hands!

## AFTD Volunteer: Charles Elligson

While caring for his wife Janet Collins Elligson at home for several years, Charles Elligson of North Carolina found support through a local FTD support group. He found information and resources through AFTD. Charles says that he could not have survived his caregiving years without both. Today, as an AFTD volunteer, he channels his personal experience with FTD into a role as an AFTD-affiliated support group facilitator, and efforts to raise awareness.



### **Tell us about your volunteer experiences to date.**

I went through the formal training to become an AFTD-affiliated support group facilitator. I also raise awareness about FTD, AFTD and caregiving through speaking engagements and table settings for various organizations and professional networks, as well as with my local church community.

### **How has the overall volunteer experience made you feel?**

It brings deep satisfaction and true joy to know that you are using your gifts and skills to bring support group members together. They bring light, hope, and practical answers to seemingly unsolvable problems... It is also a great feeling to be able to educate the community at large about FTD and the impact it has on everyone involved. In a dark world, there's now light.

### **What you have learned from your volunteer experiences so far?**

As a support group facilitator I have learned greater understanding of the unique way FTD presents in persons diagnosed. I've learned ways to tailor FTD information and support to fit the many unique FTD situations; and a true sense



of how facilitation can contribute to group learning. Through my awareness efforts I have discovered that people are interested and want to learn more.

### **What would you say to people who are considering volunteering with AFTD?**

AFTD offers volunteers easy access, guidance on how to move forward, and support materials so you can feel confident in your volunteer role. Thanks to the support and guidance provided by Regional Coordinator Volunteers like Michelle Grant, you know you are not alone. Additionally, AFTD offers excellent ongoing training.

### **Anything else you wish to share?**

There is hope! A year and a half after Janet's passing, her closest friend introduced me to a Presbyterian minister, Rev. Jeannette Hickman. We married a year later.

*"Charles continues to surprise me with his outreach efforts, identifying new opportunities to educate the community," said South Atlantic Regional Coordinator Volunteer Michelle Grant. "We are grateful for his continued service to support AFTD's mission."*

