

Choosing to See

by Christine Browdy,
Director of REACH Community Respite Ministry and
PAC Certified Independent Consultant, Coach, and
Trainer

Be still for a moment. What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you feel? What is around you? Who is around you? What thoughts are running through your mind? What are you remembering? What are you hoping for? What are your dreams? What are your fears? These are questions we all, at some point in our lives, have asked ourselves...maybe over and over. As I sat in the schoolyard with members of a small village in Central America, I watched. I looked into their eyes and realized that some of the looks were the same. The stories were similar. The desires of the hearts were parallel, and the tears were real. I saw the connection and realized that just because we crossed a border and spoke a different language, we were not all that different.

I watched children play and experience the newness of life together while at the same time seeing a young girl sitting alone and watching from a distance. All she needed was a friend, a warm smile, an outstretched hand, and someone to understand. I walked over and just sat next to her. I didn't have to say a word, she understood why I was there.



Several years later I found myself watching someone else experience the newness of his life as he faced Alzheimers disease and Parkinsons disease. I could see him begin to hide and watch from a distance. What he too needed and wanted the most was a friend, a warm smile, an outstretched hand, and someone to understand. So, I joined him. I walked with him. I chose to learn his new language. I chose to see him.

Whether a young girl in Honduras, or an 86-year-old man with a dying brain, deeply and intentionally planted in all of us is the primitive need to recognize, respond, and relish in finding pleasure. When the world begins to feel lonely and isolating, we can choose to step in, and help ease the isolation of a changing mind faced with a changing world. Slow down, make a connection, reach out, and be present. By doing this, you are saying, ***you matter, you have value, I choose to see you.***



I went to help and offer care and support to the people of Honduras and later to my father-in-law. Interestingly enough, they are the ones who helped me, offered care, supported me, and taught me how to ***love deeper and without boundaries.*** Is that not what we are called to do? Love unconditionally, without strings attached. Positively caring, seeing through the past, and just seeing one another as we are right now.

Christine Browdy developed an interest in working with people living with dementia and their care partners at the age of 15. She supported that passion through volunteer work, formal education, and her professional career. Currently, Christine is the Director for REACH Community Respite Ministry in Auburn, Alabama, which is part of the Respite For All Foundation (RespiteForAll.org). REACH stands for: Refresh. Encourage. Activities. Care. Hope. The vision of REACH is to create a community of hope that embraces the needs of people living with dementia and the loved ones who care for them. We develop and deploy well trained volunteers who meet our friends where they are and are intentionally present with them in the moment.

Christine received her Bachelor's in Health Administration at Auburn University and graduated from Troy University with a Master's in Counseling. She currently holds a Society of Certified Senior Advisors designation, is a member of the National Board of Certified Counselors, and is a PAC Certified Independent Consultant, Coach, and Trainer. Christine and her husband, Billy have been married for seven years and have a 3-year-old little girl and a 15-month-old little boy.