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Atlanta Gives Back: Roy Otwell

Local business owner supports Alzheimer's Association

By Kelley Hagen
Special to Metromix
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Doug Henderson (left) and Roy Otwell (right) are the owners of Switch Modern.

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Roy Otwell's mother was "robbed of her personhood" through the mentally devastating effects of Alzheimer's. Since his mother's diagnosis nine years ago, he has been committed to serving the Alzheimer's Association, an organization that has supported him and his family during a trying experience.

"There is nothing like having a family experience with a disease to make the cause personal and important," Oswell said.

As the co-owner of Switch Modern, a modern furniture store on the Westside, Otwell has been able to use his business as a means to support a cause that hits close to home. He discussed his personal experience with Alzheimer's and how people can support the cause this holiday season.

When and how did you get involved with the Alzheimer's Association? Unfortunately, my involvement with the Alzheimer's Association began when my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease about nine years ago. When a family is faced with this horrible disease, you don't know where to turn for information, assistance, and support.



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We found that the Alzheimer's Association helped us tremendously during this treacherous journey. Now, two years after my mother's death, it is important to me that I not only help the association provide services to other affected families, but also help raise money and awareness so this disease can be cured and eradicated. Fortunately, my business partner [Doug Henderson] was there for me and my family. He is every bit as supportive of this cause as I am.

Is there anything our readers should know about Alzheimer's that they might not be aware of? This disease robs a person and the person's family of their very personhood. It is an irreversible, progressive brain disease. It is estimated that approximately 5.1 million Americans may now have Alzheimer's. Staggering.

How can our readers help support the cause? This is an easy question for me to answer. Please support our one-week effort to support the Alzheimer's Association. From Wednesday, Nov. 30, to Tuesday Dec. 6, 2011, Switch Modern is offering all home accessories and lighting at 10 percent off.

During this week we will also donate another 10 percent of proceeds to the Alzheimer's Association. This Shop, Save, & Donate promotion is good in-store (the store is located at 1193 Howell Mill Road in Atlanta) and online (switchmodern.com).

We are having a kickoff shopping event Wednesday evening, Nov. 30 from 6 to 8:30 p.m. There will be food from Sotto Sotto and festive cocktails. Everyone please come, have some fun, and help us help the Alzheimer's Association. RSVP to rsvp@lizlapiduspr.com.

When you are not running your store and raising money for the Alzheimer's Association, where can we spot you around town? I divide my time between ATL and NYC. When I am not at Switch Modern, I am found at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta Airport.

In Atlanta, I enjoy cocktails and dining on the Westside : JCT Kitchen, Bocado, and Miller Union are my standbys. I must confess that I need a monthly fried chicken fix from the Colonnade and a barbecue fix from Hottie Hawgs.

What advice would you give people looking to give back to the community? Do not be discouraged by the economy. Even in these less-than-ideal times, you can find a way to give back. It's true that when you support a charity, you always get back more than you give.

Any final thoughts? Get involved. Everybody can.

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