



Pay it Forward: Capturing the ‘Heart’ of Caregivers in Photographs

Raymond Holman Jr. describes them as “invisible people”—caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementias who are doing a great service but often go unrecognized. Now, Holman is shining the spotlight on these caregivers with a special photography exhibit.

A professional photographer for nearly 20 years, the Philadelphia native was drawn to these subjects after his father, Raymond W. Holman Sr., was diagnosed with dementia in 1996. Once he could no longer care for his father alone, Holman hired two female caregivers.

With this, he said he further grew to “appreciate the sacrifices caregivers make and the love that they have for other human beings.”

“You have to have a special cell in you that says take care of that human being...a thought that says do the right thing,” he said.

It is this dedication and love that Holman has tried to capture in photographs.

Since he started his project five months ago, he has snapped portraits of 50 caregivers. They range in age from 75 to 90 and hail from the Philadelphia area, Delaware, Florida and New Jersey.

“When I take the photos I try to feel their heart,” Holman explained. “When people look at the photos [I want them] to be able to feel the love the caregivers

give to those they are caring for so that we can all pass it on to each other.”

The exhibit will be at The African American Museum in Philadelphia for one month, beginning on May 8.

Beyond the inaugural display, Holman’s bigger plan is to showcase the photographs across the country, raising awareness of caregiving and offering caregivers the opportunity to interact with one another. In addition, he hopes to create a fund in his father’s name to provide respite grants to caregivers.

To Holman, this project is more than a way of paying it forward.

“I think that the heavens gave me this assignment to do,” he suggested. “When I came up with it, it wasn’t just that I wanted to do it, but that it was given to me.”

DETAILS: www.aampmuseum.org/calendar

— JESSIE OSBORNE

Pay it Forward appears periodically in *ADvantage Points*. It highlights current or former caregivers who are giving back in some way as a result of their experiences with Alzheimer’s disease.