Annual Walks to End Alzheimer's are an attempt to obtain research money for a disease that affects many but which falls considerably down the funding chain by the National Institute of Health.

The National Institute of Health spends over $6 billion a year on cancer research, over $4 billion on heart and cardiovascular disease research and over $3 billion on HIV/AIDS research—with obvious payoffs in lives saved.

But it spends only $480 million on Alzheimer's research, and deaths are soaring, according to Linda Butterfield, coordinator of the Dawson County Walk to End Alzheimer's set for June 15 at the Cozad County Club.

Each year, Alzheimer's takes the lives of more Americans than breast and prostate cancer combined.

Butterfield noted that from 2000 to 2008, due to the government's commitment to research on most major diseases, death rates from those diseases have declined while deaths from Alzheimer's disease have risen 66% during the same period.

For every $100 the government spends on Alzheimer's research, it spends more than $25,000 for care for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias, she said.

Research leading to treatments that delay onset of Alzheimer's by just five years would cut government spending on the disease by 45%, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

"The consequences of doing nothing will be continuing to pay for caring—and we should ensure more effective care for those with this devastating disease," Butterfield said. "But if we commit

now to curing—to fund research that leads to a breakthrough—we can save billions of dollars. A commitment today to innovation, to finding a cure, will yield the savings of tomorrow."

A person with Alzheimer's disease on average costs Medicare three times more and costs Medicaid nine times more than someone without the disease, the Alzheimer's Association said.

While Alzheimer's is not normal aging, age is the greatest risk factor for the disease. This means Baby Boomers are its next target. Too many of America's Baby Boomers will spend their retirement years either with Alzheimer's or caring for someone who has it.

"Make the decision today to get involved in finding a cure," Butterfield suggested. "Take action and join us in Dawson County's Walk to End Alzheimer's. The walk is the nation's largest fundraiser for research of Alzheimer's and to support those afflicted with the disease and their families."

Participants can get involved several ways, including by making a contribution to the walk and/or participate in the walk. Participants can either walk or golf. The Cozad Country Club is donating the green fees for nine holes and waiving the rental cost of golf carts and clubs.

If you are unable to attend the event and would like to make a donation you can go to the Dawson County Walk to End Alzheimer's website or mail to: Linda Butterfield, Chairperson, Dawson County Walk to End Alzheimer's, 1711 Ave. J, Gothenburg, NE 69138 (make checks payable to Alzheimer's Association)