Promoting Resilience through Creative Engagement

By Susan H. McFadden, PhD and Anne D. Basting, PhD


Table 1. Sampling of Programs for Creative Engagement with People Living with Dementia

IMPROV, DANCE, MUSIC, POETRY
Alzheimer’s Poetry Project
www.alzpoetry.org

The Alzheimer’s Poetry Project is based on a simple idea, to read classic poems to people living with Alzheimer's disease that they might have learned as children.

Background- During a period of ten years a new approach to engage participants with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia in the performative aspects of poetry and to create new poems was developed.

Results- Data indicates that a significant number of people in mid to late stage dementia remember words and lines from poems they learned in childhood. Moreover, the participants show a high level of positive facial expressions, laughter, verbalizing memories, and robust social interactions. Of interest is the use of call and response, where the session leader recites a line from a well-known poem and the group echoes the line. Coupling this performance technique with a simple prompt or opened ended question enables a group poem to be composed, based on the participant's responses.

Conclusion- The findings led to the development of a training system for artists, family members, and healthcare workers in using poetry with dementia.

Alzheimer’s Poetry Project Mission
Our goal is to facilitate the creativity of people living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. We strive to advocate for cultural change in the healthcare industry and for the daily inclusion of arts in assisted living and adult day care. Further, we do not set boundaries in our beliefs in what possible for people with memory impairment to create.
By saying to people with dementia, we value you; we are saying we value all members of our community. By working with health care professionals and giving them a tool to have fun with and stimulate the people they serve, we are saying we value your work. By working with family members who have a loved one with dementia, we are saying you are not alone in your struggle to treat your loved one with dignity.

Artz: Artists for Alzheimer’s & I’m Still Here Foundation
www.imstillhere.org/artz

ARTZ has three primary programs:

1. The Artists Network: ARTZ recruits and trains volunteer artists to perform and work side by side with people living with dementia
2. The Museums Network: ARTZ trains museum staff and implements educational museum tours for people living with dementia and their care partners.
3. The Cultural Events Network: ARTZ develops annually recurring community-based programs for people living with dementia and their care partners, which have led to increased accessibility and opportunity.

Kairos Alive (dance and story)
www.kairosalive.org

Mission: Our mission is to support the artistic work of Maria Genné and promote her vision of sharing the joy of intergenerational interactive participatory dance and story, and to liberate its power to nurture and heal.

Vision: KAIROS alive! uses dance and storytelling to create a sense of community and well-being in participants of all ages and walks of life.

Work: Our work draws upon modern dance, movement improvisation, folk dance, and oral history traditions from around the world, and the lives of inspiring people. Artistic Director Maria Genné is recognized for her ability to highlight the beauty of human experience through movement and story, skillfully weaving together the gifts of each performer. KAIROS Dance™ is the only intergenerational modern dance company in Minnesota, and one of only a handful in the US.

We are an unusual and unique dance company of all different ages (7-98 years). We have created an award winning program called KAIROS Dancing Heart™ which vitally engages frail elders, including those with mid-to-late stage Alzheimer’s, in a weekly dance and storytelling playshop that has shown to positively improve the health of participants. We have won three national awards: The 2011 Rosalinde Gilbert Innovations in Alzheimer’s Diaseas Caregiver Legacy Award, The Archstone Award for Excellence in Program Innovation from The American Public Health Association and the 2008 Mind Alert Award from the American Society on Aging.
Songwriting Works
www.songwritingworks.org

Songwriting Works™ fulfills its mission to restore joy, hope, health and community by bringing interactive musical adventures, skills building workshops and inclusive events to elders, youth, and families in neighborhoods, care centers, and schools. Also offering training and consulting to health, arts, and social service providers internationally.

TimeSlips Creative Storytelling
www.timeslips.org

TimeSlips offers an elegantly simple revolution in long-term care - a clear shift from "managing behaviors" toward using the arts to engage and build community. In an age when medicine offers few treatments for dementia, TimeSlips provides hope through meaningful communication and connection. While started back in 1998, TimeSlips became an independent non-profit in 2013. Providing:

- Online Certification to Individuals in our improvisational storytelling method
- Training for Organizations on how to building a creative community of care, engaging elders, staff, families, and volunteers
- A Creativity Journal for one-on-one use (available through Attainment Co.). Ideal for families, home care, and hospice
- Online Trainings that support student (high school and higher education) service learning
- FREE online storytelling software that lets you create together and share your stories with others around the world. Come and play today! Start a story!

MUSEUM-BASED
Arts & Minds (New York City)
www.artsandminds.org

Arts & Minds is a non-profit organization committed to improving quality of life for people living with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. Partnering with museums to provide meaningful art-centered activities that create positive cognitive experiences, enhance communication, and reduce isolation. Their programs empower people with dementia, family members, professional caregivers, and educators to strengthen social, emotional, and spiritual bonds by engaging with art.

Meet Me at MOMA (New York City)
https://www.moma.org/meetme/index
About The MoMA Alzheimer's Project

The MoMA Alzheimer's Project was a special initiative in the Museum's Department of Education. The initiative took place from 2007 to 2014 and was generously funded by MetLife Foundation. During this time, MoMA staff expanded on the success of the Museum’s existing education programs for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and their care partners through the development of training resources intended for use by arts and health professionals on how to make art accessible to people with dementia using MoMA's teaching methodologies and approach.

MoMA remains as committed as ever to providing programming for individuals living with dementia and their care partners and to supporting the development and success of this type of programming around the world. To that end, the Museum will continue to offer engaging programming and resources for this key constituency. For more information on MoMA's ongoing education programs for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or dementia and their care partners, visit the Programs page.

In addition, MoMA staff will continue to provide resources, information, and advice to other organizations and to facilitate training workshops locally, nationally, and abroad. We are poised to maintain our role as a connector in this field- to serve as a hub for conversations on aging and creativity and to provide a vital link for colleagues around the world who are interested in making art accessible to people with dementia. For more information on these continued efforts please write to accessprograms@moma.org.

Spark Alliance (Wisconsin)
www.thesparkalliance.org

Spark brings cultural programming to families with memory loss. The Alliance shares training and scheduling information to act as a resource for the families we serve and other cultural organizations that wish to open themselves to older adults regardless of disability.

Here: Now at the Frye Museum (Seattle)
www.fryemuseum.org/program/here_now/

here:now is an arts-engagement program for individuals living with dementia and their care partners to enjoy a creative and relaxing time together. The only museum-based arts program of its kind in Washington State, here:now offers gallery tours and art-making classes designed for individuals with young-onset or early to mid-stage dementia and their care partners.

Over the next two years the Frye is piloting new program components to serve individuals as their disease progresses. The museum will also convene a professional development conference and workshop on art, creativity and dementia care; establish a student internship in creative aging with a local university; and publish a report and present the results of the
program pilot at conferences. An advisory committee of community advocates and leaders in gerontology, neuropsychology, creative aging, and memory care guides the expansion.