



Building Relationships through the Arts: “Gather at the Gallery”

Psychologist Rudolph Arnheim once said that art reminds us what it is meant to do for everybody by demonstrating what it can do for the distressed. The *Gather at the Gallery* art program and research initiative, led by Cara Dowhaniuk, program coordinator at the Alzheimer Society of Kitchener-Waterloo, and Dr. Lisa Meschino, postdoctoral researcher with Dr. Sherry Dupuis at MAREP, guides individuals with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia and their care partners in observing and creating art in a supportive, non-threatening environment.

Funded by the Alzheimer Society of Canada, *Gather at the Gallery* examines how a creative arts program can foster social integration and relationality. Partnering with local museums, galleries, and artists, the program has run in 10-week modules since May 2011. Registration has been at capacity with 14 participants for two of the three modules. Program coordinators are now accepting registrants for the spring session.

Comments from community partners include: “I’m really excited for the program to grow from what we started.” “... at the end I felt that I’d made friends with some of the couples...that doesn’t often happen when you do a tour.”



LEFT: A person with dementia paints an abstract in acrylics at the Button Factory, a community partner that provided a three-session workshop.

RIGHT: A person with dementia cuts glass for a sushi dish at Grand River Glassworks while his wife and other participants look on. Community partner Grand River Glassworks provided a three-session workshop on glass fusion.



For persons with dementia and their care partners, the program can promote:

A sense of self-worth: Participants are proud of their finished art pieces and want to continue with what they have learned. “*I really enjoyed everything and would like to do some of the [other] glass pictures.*”

A sense of belonging: A participant with early onset dementia observed that creating art with others experiencing memory loss helped with the anger he has felt since his diagnosis. Connecting through art “*took away the feeling of ‘why me’*” and “*changed the way I felt about it [the disease].*”

Cognitive stimulation: One participant with dementia felt connected to an earlier time in her life when she enjoyed a variety of creative activities; the program “*brought back memories of the past*” for her.

A sense of wellbeing: One care partner said: “*I’m very enthusiastic about the whole program because it’s opening us up...The concept of getting people to go into themselves a bit and to think and talk is wonderful.*” Her husband added: “*It’s good to have a group; you can get different ideas that you respond to...[it helps your thoughts] just click in your mind.*”

In May 2012, program organizers plan to hold a public exhibition of participants’ artwork at the Button Factory in Waterloo to raise awareness of how creative arts can contribute to continued companionship and social integration. To learn more about *Gather at the Gallery*, contact Cara Dowhaniuk at (519) 742-1422 or Dr. Lisa Meschino at (519) 888-4567, ext. 35280.

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Considerations for the Holidays

1. For Persons with Dementia

“considerations for the holidays for persons with dementia” were suggested by the L.E.A.D. group — a day program for persons living with early stage dementia — at the John Noble Home in Brantford, ON

when visiting with family and friends ...

- Limit the number of guests.
- Ask friends and relatives to call before they visit to give you time to prepare yourself.
- Visit during your best time of day.
- Ask friends and relatives to host gatherings.
- Ask your host where there is a quiet space you can retreat to if needed.
- Use a calendar or sticky notes to keep track of gatherings and holiday parties.
- Set a reasonable holiday schedule that won't wear you out – spread visits out over the month.
- Cut back on the number of presents – pick names for gift giving.
- KISS (Keep It Simple Sweetheart).

when holiday shopping ...

- Avoid malls during busy times.
- Set limits and don't worry about buying gifts for as many people now — *“I only buy for the small children in my family.”*
- Send money rather than gifts, or give the “gift of time.”
- Have your spouse/family member help you shop (give them a list).
- Shop online or from a catalogue to avoid crowded stores.
- Buy stocks, bonds, or gift-cards.

when baking for the holidays ...

- Buy ready-made baked goods from your grocery store or bakery.
- Get a family member or friend who likes baking to bake with you or for you.
- Make only the types of baked goods that you really enjoy and are able to make — *“I make fewer things now.”*
- Have a family member/spouse help by gathering the ingredients or doing parts of the baking.
- Bake with the children/grandchildren; this allows them to learn while helping you.
- Use a checklist to check off each ingredient you add or step that you complete.

when sending holiday cards to family and friends ...

- Make lists (if you have not received a card from someone for over two years, remove the person from your list).
- Exchange/share just one card between friends (send one card to and from each other each year).
- Send fewer cards over the holidays — *“I only send to relatives who live far away.”*
- Email or call relatives rather than sending cards — *“It is less expensive and I enjoy hearing from relatives and friends at this time of year.”*
- Ask friends/relatives to pass greetings on to others for you.
- Spend “face time” instead of writing cards.

when preparing meals for the holidays ...

- Eat at other family and friends' homes.
- Cook less — buy a turkey breast rather than a whole turkey, or a prepared holiday meal.
- Eat out! Some restaurants are open Christmas Day — no cooking and no cleaning!
- Provide finger foods or have potluck.

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2. For Families of Persons with Dementia

- Decide what's most important for you and your family, and set priorities and a routine for the holidays in advance.
- Take your time — synchronize your pace to that of your family member with dementia. The holiday season is about enjoying quality time with family, and excessive entertaining activities can be overwhelming.
- Plan one activity at a time — multi-tasking can lead to frustration for all. Be understanding if your family member doesn't seem to appreciate the efforts of preparing an elaborate dinner or being part of a large holiday party, or gets anxious with too much activity — he or she may be happy to just be in your company.
- Consider how noise level and multiple distractions can impact a person with dementia when large groups of family/friends are gathered together. Don't be offended if your family member wants to go home or find a quiet space.
- Be considerate of the words *"do you remember"* — don't pressure a person to reminisce and remember specifics if the memories don't easily come. Perhaps reflections can be based on *"I remember when we used to go to..."* or *"How I enjoyed that holiday when we..."*
- Share photo albums of previous holiday celebrations, play a favourite holiday movie or some music during visits, or sing holiday favourites; all of these activities can be fun and a relaxing form of reminiscence.

3. For Staff Working with Persons with Dementia and Their Families

- Holiday celebrations may be joyous for some but distressing/sad for others. Some persons with dementia may have family/friends who visit but others may be alone; be sensitive to their needs and feelings at this time of year.
- Be respectful and take the time to learn about the person with dementia — their preferences, culture, religion, and ethnicity. Provide opportunities to celebrate the holidays according to their own preferences (e.g., music, videos, family events, etc.). Sharing holiday practices and traditions from one's country of birth can be a meaningful exchange for both staff and persons with dementia.
- With possible increased activity and visits to a person's home or long-term care residence, consider how noise level and multiple distractions can impact a person with dementia.
- Be sensitive to family members who can no longer celebrate the holidays as they once did. This may be a difficult time for all — both persons with dementia and family members. Provide opportunities to celebrate the holidays together through shared family activities and programs.

A Heartfelt Thanks to Our Dedicated Volunteers and Donors



Running an innovative not-for-profit research institute can be challenging at the best of times, and during hard economic times we rely so much more on the generosity of others. We are so grateful to the dedicated individuals who have volunteered thousands of hours to our many projects, and to the caring individuals and organizations that have supported our work financially. There is no doubt in my mind: our research and the resources developed are having a large impact around the world because of the support we get. The active involvement of those who value our work and invest their time and money ensures that our research gets into the hands of those who can use it most.

Also, our staff and students continue to go above and beyond what they are paid for because of their dedication and commitment to MAREP and the dementia cause. I am so very fortunate to work with such passionate and competent individuals.

Warmest wishes from all of us at MAREP for peace, joy and health over the holiday season and in the coming year!

Sherry Dupuis, Director, MAREP

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Bob & Jean Ann Norman

Fuelling a Vision



Bob Norman was beginning his term as dean of the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences in the early 90s when he first met Ken Murray. “Ken is a true champion and an inspiration,” says Bob. “From his wife’s journey with Alzheimer’s, he recognized the need to better support those living with and affected by Alzheimer’s, and the importance of including persons with dementia in decision-making throughout the journey. He also identified that Applied Health Sciences could make this happen.”

Inspired by Ken Murray’s vision, Bob collaborated with Mike Sharratt, Associate Dean for Special Projects at the time, to move the concept forward. Bob and Mike’s efforts ultimately resulted in the establishment of MAREP. Now retired, Bob remains committed to Ken’s vision. He and his spouse, Jean Ann, retired Head of Special Education at a high school, are regular monthly donors.

While Ken was the spark, ongoing supporters like Bob and Jean Ann are the fuel that allows MAREP to continue developing resources for millions of Canadians affected by dementia. Their commitment to MAREP over the years stems from a desire to provide more people with research-based resources that are found mainly in universities. “What sets MAREP apart is its invaluable partnership approach,” explains Bob. “Who better to understand what is needed than those currently living with dementia? Because its work is carried out at the University of Waterloo by highly regarded researchers in partnership with those living with dementia and their partners in care, MAREP’s tools and resources are unmatched.”

“It is inevitable that this disease will affect someone you know,” notes Jean Ann. “We feel strongly that the researchers at MAREP are working diligently to provide trusted tools and resources.” Bob adds, “These days it is hard to sift through the mass of information out there, in the media and online. It’s hard to know if a particular source is credible. We know that the information coming out of MAREP is high quality and research evidence-based. It’s been developed with partners across the country and can help those around the world cope with the challenges at hand.”

Assistance from MAREP’s ongoing supporters buoys the development and distribution of *By Us For Us* guides across the country, as well as resources like the *A Changing Melody* toolkit, which can be used to organize an information-sharing forum for persons with dementia and their partners in care.

Summing up their motivation for their ongoing support of MAREP, Bob and Jean Ann conclude, “Most importantly we hope our gift will help change the way people view dementia. Through MAREP’s educational resources, people can better understand the experiences and needs of those living with and affected by dementia, and learn how to be a supportive and effective partner in the journey.”

Kenneth G. Murray Alzheimer
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MAREP

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Innovations: Enhancing Ability in Dementia Care is published quarterly by MAREP, an innovative program that adopts a partnership approach and integrates research and educational activities in an effort to improve dementia care practices in Canada and beyond. The goal of MAREP is to enhance the ability of all involved in dementia care, including persons with dementia, their family partners in care, and professional care partners, to respond to the needs of persons with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias and ultimately improve the quality of life of all those experiencing dementia.

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This newsletter is designed to provide accurate information. Although the information presented and the opinions expressed are gathered from sources thought to be reliable, their accuracy and correct interpretation cannot be guaranteed.

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