

PVMCI

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Pioneer Valley Memory Care Initiative | Autumn 2023

QUARTERLY

FUNDED BY THE EISENBERG FAMILY TRUST

Welcome to our Fall Newsletter

One of the best things about living in New England is fall. I love this time of year—the air gets a little crisper, the leaves start to change. In our family, we love an annual trip to an orchard to pick apples and we never miss the Ashfield Fall Festival—this year it’s the weekend of 10/7-10/8.

On sunny days, I look around in awe at the beauty of the fall colors contrasted with the bright blue sky. This is a great time of year to take a walk, collect leaves, and enjoy all of the sensory input that we love about fall—the colors, sounds, smells and textures around us.

I am reminded of the quote by Mary Oliver, “Instructions for living a life. Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.”

To that point, Karen Romanowski writes about the movement to “Reimagine Dementia,” by transforming the narrative and changing the view of how we see and interact with those

who have dementia, with the hope to bring joy and growth to all. Sharon Asher writes about taking moments to appreciate our own inner beauty as we reflect on the changes around us. Deb Peavey speaks to the importance of sensory input for all of us, but especially those of us living with dementia. She includes a

recipe for butternut squash soup, which is one of my favorite uses for fall vegetables. Christine Grimaldi brings a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and care to all that she

does; you can learn more about her and her adorable toddler in “In the Spotlight.” Deb compiled a wonderful and varied list of fall activities and celebrations. I hope you are able to take advantage of this season and, if you do and you have better photographic skills than I do, please share!

Best to all,

Rebecca Starr, MD, Medical Director,
Geriatrics, MGB Cooley Dickinson Healthcare.

*“Instructions for living a life.
Pay attention. Be astonished.
Tell about it.”*

~ Mary Oliver



Taking It to the Streets – Reimagining Dementia

~Karen Romanowski, RN

In September, the organization “Reimagining Dementia: A Creative Coalition for Justice” announced a new grassroots campaign called Taking It to the Streets. Taking It to the Streets is an effort to transform the narrative and shatter the silence around dementia. The goal of their campaign inspired me share my thoughts on this important topic to lift the taboo of memory loss and cognitive change.

While I have had moments and days as a care partner when I have been too tired to be creative, positive, or re-imagine ANYTHING, I love the idea of working to create a new lens through which to view dementia. I am reminded that I have choices about how I will interact with and react to people living with memory loss.

I want people living with memory loss and their care partners to feel and share the same freedoms that I want for everyone; to be seen, understood and accepted and to be able to engage with their community in whatever way feels right to them.

Reimagining Dementia’s Call to Action

Statement: “Reimagining Dementia: A Creative Coalition for Justice is an international group of dementia activists and allies—health professionals, people living with dementia (young and old), carers/care partners, family and community members,

advocates, artists, academics, policy makers and others—who share a diverse and humanizing vision of care and support that promotes inclusion, relationality, creativity, joy and the possibility of growth for everyone living with, and impacted by, dementia.

We focus on developing projects, programs, policies and approaches that successfully use play, performance, improvisation and the arts to creatively challenge the biomedical and institutional approaches to care, and the fear, stigma and hopelessness they perpetuate. In the midst of a global pandemic, we are mobilizing tens of thousands of people with dementia and their families—together with the communities and care settings in which they live—to create environments in which everyone is supported to thrive and to grow.”

To learn more about Reimagining Dementia, please visit their website:



<https://www.reimaginingdementia.com/> ❖

RECOMMENDED READING

Counter Clockwise by Ellen J. Langer.

“Counterclockwise makes a strong case for the influence of expectation and belief on how our bodies function, on how we heal, and even how we age. Ellen Langer presents fascinating scientific data to support this view and argues convincingly that we should learn to take greater control of our health through the practice of *mindfulness*. Her research is *innovative and empowering*.” —Andrew Weil, M.D.



Enjoying the Seasons

~Sharon Asher, RN, BSN, MBA, PROGRAM MANAGER

During the long winter months, we often long for warm weather. We look forward to going outside and feeling the sun and fresh air on our skin. We often can't wait for the longer daylight hours. Spring arrives and we finally get some warmer days, and we get outside. Then, before you know it, summer is upon us! As lovely as summer weather is, it is hot! As the hot days go on, we start to long for the cooler weather again!

According to people.com, 33% of people claim fall is their favorite season. I would count myself as one of those folks! I feel so relieved when the intense heat relents. I

love sitting by a fire in the back yard and going for long walks. The trees in our area put on their show, which is so beautiful.



Before you know it, the holiday season starts to creep in.

Reflecting on the changing seasons leads to thinking about enjoying the changing seasons of our lives. Each phase of our life offers its own special joys and challenges. As a former “sandwich generation” caregiver

myself, finding moments of joy in the caregiving season of our life can sometimes be challenging but is so important to our own wellbeing. As you see the leaves turning color



this fall, notice that they are revealing their hidden beauty. Those beautiful colors were there all summer but are only revealed when photosynthesis slows and the green color fades. As we all grow older, our own inner beauty can more easily shine through as we gain wisdom and grace. I hope you can appreciate your inner beauty and that of those around you as you look at the fall foliage this year. ❖

Seasonal Foods for Sensory Stimulation

Sensory activities can help improve mood, emotional well-being, cognitive functioning, and overall quality of life, especially for people living with dementia. Cooking and baking with strong smells and textures can provide an important form of sensory stimulation. Making things from seasonally available ingredients is an added way to create powerful connections.

Loss of appetite is a common symptom of dementia, and it can be caused by a variety of factors. For example, an individual may experience a decreased sense of taste or smell, which can make



food less appealing. Preparing foods together when possible, sharing memories while doing so, and choosing seasonally available vegetables and fruits can enhance the experience.

Autumn is rich with local produce in the Pioneer Valley. A drive in the country provides ample opportunities to stop and purchase a variety of farm fresh vegetables including butternut squash, sweet potatoes, fingerling potatoes, broccoli, kale, cabbage, brussels sprouts, celeriac, fennel, pumpkins, radicchio, and shelling beans.

Try this delicious and savory butternut squash soup made from scratch, or purchase ready made from grocery stores carrying Panera, Pacific Foods, Kettle & Fire, and Nature's Promise. ❖

Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

INGREDIENTS

1 Large Butternut Squash (about 3 lbs) halved vertically and seeds removed

1 T Olive Oil (plus more for drizzling)

1/2 C Shallots, chopped

1t Salt

4 Garlic cloves, pressed or minced

1 t Maple syrup

1/8 t of Ground Nutmeg

4 C Vegetable Broth

2 T Butter (to taste)

Freshly Ground Black Pepper (to taste)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 425 and line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment. Place squash on pan and drizzle each half with enough olive oil to lightly coat squash on the inside (about ½ t each). Rub the oil over the inside of the squash and sprinkle it with salt and pepper.
2. Roast the squash face down until tender and cooked through, about 40 to 50 minutes. Set the squash aside until it's cool enough to handle, about 10 minutes, then scoop the cooked squash out of skin and put in blender (set aside).
3. Meanwhile, in a skillet, warm 1 T olive oil over medium heat until shimmering. Add the chopped shallot and 1 t salt. Cook, stirring often, until the shallot has softened and is starting to turn golden on the edges, about 3 to 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute, stirring frequently. Transfer the contents to blender.
4. Add the maple syrup, nutmeg and a few twists of freshly ground black pepper to the blender. Pour in 3 cups vegetable broth, being careful not to fill the container past the maximum fill line (you can work in batches if necessary, and stir in any remaining broth later).
5. Securely fasten the lid. Blend on high (or select the soup preset, if available), being careful to avoid hot steam escaping from the lid, until your soup is ultra creamy and warmed through.
6. For thinner soup, stir in the remaining cup of broth. Add 1 to 2 T butter or olive oil, and more salt and pepper to taste, and blend well. When serving, drizzle each bowl with olive oil.

In the Spotlight

Staff Member Name: Christine Grimaldi, OTR/L

Current Role at PVMCI: Memory Care Specialist

Your Professional Background: I worked in elementary education for 7 years in various roles. I love teaching children but wanted the opportunity to work with other populations and in different practice settings. Seeing students respond well to school occupational therapy (OT) and talking with several people in the field made me pursue a career in OT. While studying, I worked as a Personal Care Assistant with a woman with complex medical and mental health issues. I enjoyed the relationship developed through providing one on one care. As an OT, I have worked in a Skilled Nursing Facility and on inpatient psychiatric units, roles which have allowed me to work with people in many ways. I enjoyed conducting evaluations and doing individual interventions. Leading groups on the inpatient unit was always interesting! All my professional experience informs the work I am doing now as a Memory Care Specialist. I love my team and especially enjoy the work I am doing with clients.

What drew you to work with older adults with memory loss? My grandmother had dementia for 15 years and I recently lost my mother-in-law to ALS with frontotemporal dementia. I have a lot of personal and professional experience working with people experiencing brain changes. I have seen how having access to education and resources makes navigating the challenges that come with



memory impairment more manageable. The mission of Occupational Therapy is to help people maintain their functioning and live as fully and independently as possible. I appreciate what my lens as an OT allows me to bring to my work. Watching people adapt to living with progressive memory loss inspires me and I know that the support our program offers is necessary and important. I am grateful to be a part of it.

What is your educational background? I graduated from Wesleyan University with a Bachelor of Arts. I have a teaching certificate from Antioch University and a Masters of Occupational Therapy degree from Bay Path University.

What do you love about your job? I love the relationships I build with clients and their families. I appreciate being able to help people during difficult moments and recognize small victories or moments of change in their lives. Occupational Therapy is all about fostering growth and independence and I appreciate The Pioneer Valley Memory Care Initiative's model for addressing

memory impairment. My colleagues are incredibly committed, hardworking, and lovely to be on a team with. I also appreciate being part of a program that is community-based; this allows me to spend more time with my clients and visit people at home where I can get to know them in their own environment.

Do you have any hobbies? Raising a toddler is my hobby! Caring for my first born and exploring the world through his eyes is how I spend most of my time these days and has been my greatest joy. I also enjoy hiking, running, watching movies, and spending time with friends and family. I am an animal lover and have had many dogs and cats. ❖

FALL ACTIVITY IDEAS

Early and Middle Stage Dementia



Bake a seasonal brain-healthy dish together, using whole foods such as apples, pumpkin or squash. Apple pie is always a treat. See page 8 for a soup recipe to try.

Go on an autumn walk to enjoy the fall leaves and talk about any birds or nature you see, the colors of the leaves changing and the species of trees.



Make some autumn-themed crafts. Many ideas can be found on sites like Pinterest (www.pinterest.com), and materials can be found on S & S Arts and Crafts Supplies (www.ssw.com). Search under “fall crafts” and “senior activities” or take a drive to your local Michaels craft store.

Rake leaves or do some simple fall clean up in the yard or garden. Save or sprinkle seeds for next year’s garden.

Visit an apple orchard or a pumpkin patch and buy some seasonal fruits, gourds, vegetables or fresh cider.



Late Stage Dementia



Cook a fall-themed dish for your loved one and allow them to smell the scent of fall cooking and eat a tasty, brain healthy meal or treat. Apple sauce is fun, easy and delicious.

Collect fall leaves and other nature items and bring them



indoors for your loved one to feel, smell and see. Create a sensory stimulating collection in a basket with leaves, milkweed pods and acorns and other natural objects.

Make a homemade potpourri out of fall seasonings such as cinnamon and cloves, add to a pan of water and cook on low heat with citrus fruit peelings and apples to fill the room with the scent of fall baking.

Go Leaf Peeping on a beautiful crisp day.



Listen to music on the radio and enjoy the sights, engaging in conversation about what you’re seeing and experiencing as you go. Stop at a farm stand for some pumpkins or gourds to bring home. See if your local senior center has any bus trips planned for this purpose and sign up.



Sit on a Park Bench and enjoy the scenery. Pack a thermos of hot tea or cider to enjoy while you’re there.

Limited Mobility Activities

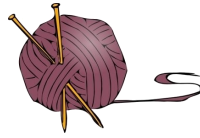
Bird watching. Try putting out some bird feeders in the yard to see a nature show from the comfort of your kitchen window or living room. Notice how the previously bright yellow goldfinches have turned dusky. Cover a pinecone with peanut butter and roll it in birdseed to create a tasty treat for backyard birds (be sure to tie a piece of string to the stem first).



(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Crocheting, knitting or sewing.

Many older adults are comforted by—and are excellent at—these activities. Mending is another option to try.



Organize a fall themed book club. Organizing a book club with a few close friends or relatives is a great way to ensure caregivers and those with



dementia, maintain social contact with others. Socializing is considered a vital brain healthy activity and what better way to get together with others than to be involved in a group

discussion about an interesting read. Make sure that the get-togethers are kept short and that the person with dementia is kept in the loop of the group dialogue.

Listen to music together. Music has been found to help improve cognition and memory and it's one of the top brain-healthy activities you can do with your loved one with dementia.

Here are some suggestions you can ask your smart phone or speaker to play: *Early Autumn*, Ella Fitzgerald; *Autumn in New York*, Louis



Armstrong & Ella Fitzgerald; *Autumn Leaves*, Roger Williams; *See You In September*, The Happening; *Autumn of My Life*, Bobby Goldsboro; *September Morn*, Neil Diamond; *Wonderful World*, Sam Cooke.

Area Happenings



Beavers at Sundown

Saturday, October 21, 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

North Farms Road entrance

Discover the natural history of beavers, how they alter the landscape and provide habitat for other wildlife on this walk at Fitzgerald Lake. Meet at the North Farms Road entrance and walk about 3/4

mile searching for signs of beavers. All ages welcome. Binoculars and shoes for wet, muddy conditions are recommended. For more information on this program call Dave Pritchard (413-268-3668) or Dick Wynne (413-584-7930). To sign up, please email Dave Pritchard at: Regitrar.BroadBrookCoalition@gmail.com.

Healing Harmonies Choir

Do you like to sing? Healing Harmonies is an informal singing group designed for individuals with diagnosed neurological conditions, particularly those experiencing communication problems due to voice, language, or speech disorders. Caregivers are also welcome to attend and participate.

Possible conditions may include Parkinson's Disease, Progressive Supranuclear Palsy, Stroke, ALS, Traumatic/Acquired Brain Injury, Multiple Sclerosis, and Dementia. WHEN: Wednesdays, 5:30-7:00. October 4, 18, 25; November 1, 15, 22, 29; December 6, 20. WHERE: Sunderland Public Library, 20 School St, Sunderland, MA 01375

Fall Festivals and Celebrations

Eastern States Exposition (The Big E): September 15-October 1, West Springfield, MA.

Old Deerfield Fall Festival: September 23-24, Deerfield, MA.

Celebrate the Harvest at Old Sturbridge Village: September 30-October 22, Sturbridge, MA.

Kris Kringle Candle Fall Festival: October 5-6, Bernardston, MA.

Ashfield Fall Festival: October 7-8, Ashfield, MA.

Paradise City Arts Festival: October 12-14, Northampton, MA.

For more local events, visit the following websites:

- <https://explorewesternmass.com>
- <https://visithampshirecounty.com>



Presented by Northampton Senior Center, Northampton Neighbors, Pioneer Valley Memory Care Initiative & Highland Valley Elder Services

WHERE: Northampton Senior Center, 67 Conz Street, Northampton MA.

WHEN: 4th Tuesday of each month from 1:00-2:30pm. A fun activity, a light snack, coffee, tea or beverage will be offered.

RSVP REQUIRED: Please call the Northampton Senior Center at 413-587-1228 to register. Space is limited so please RSVP early to assure a space!

ABOUT MEMORY CAFES: Memory Cafes are social get togethers for people living with memory loss or dementia and their care partners. The meetings offer a fun activity as well as time for

caregivers to share experiences and connect with other care partners. Care partners are strongly encouraged to stay for the duration of the meeting.



Above: PVMCI Program Manager, Sharon Asher, led a sing-along during our July Northampton Memory Café. The third session in August was a full house! Participants brought and shared a treasured item from their life. We heard some wonderful stories, got to know each other better and shared a snack together. If you haven't yet joined the Memory Café, you are always welcome!

Funded in part by a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation.

PIONEER VALLEY MEMORY CARE INITIATIVE

The PVMCI is a coalition of health care and community providers dedicated to empowering and supporting older adults living with dementia and their family caregivers to improve their quality of life. Partnering organizations include Cooley Dickinson Hospital, Cooley Dickinson Medical Group, Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice, Valley Medical Group, the Alzheimer's Association, Highland Valley Elder Services, and local Village Networks, senior services, and Councils on Aging. The PVMCI is a member of the Massachusetts General Hospital Memory Care Initiative.

Based out of the Cooley Dickinson Geriatrics program and led by Rebecca Starr, MD, Medical Director, Geriatrician, the PVMCI serves older adults living with memory loss, dementia and Alzheimer's disease and their family caregivers who reside in Amherst, Easthampton and Northampton (including Florence and Leeds). We would be happy to discuss this program and answer any questions that you and/or your loved one may have! Call **413-582-2357** and leave a message with your contact information. A member of the PVMCI team will return your call.

This program is funded by The Eisenberg Family Trust and made possible in part by a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services through funding under the Federal Older Americans Act. To meet our federal requirements, we have been requested to advise you that "there is no fee for the service; however, a voluntary confidential donation is requested. You will not be refused service for lack of a donation. Your donation helps support the continuation of needed services for elders." Interested in donating? Please call the Cooley Dickinson development office at **413-582-2256**. *Thank you!*