

MIND MATTERS

INSIDE

- ◆ How two couples found new friendships and support through outreach programs
- ◆ Helpful tips for a successful holiday season
- ◆ Meet RaTasha and Lindsey

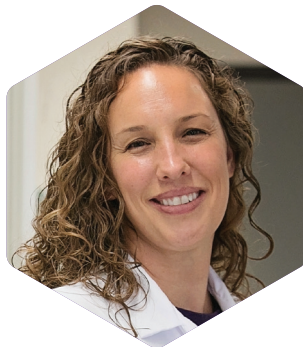


SIU MEDICINE

DALE & DEBORAH SMITH CENTER
FOR ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH
& TREATMENT

From the Director

For more than a decade, our Beyond the Medical Center programs have shown just how valuable they can be. Whether it's giving someone with memory loss a space to relax and find comfort in creative projects they can excel at, or to give caregivers a chance to unwind or connect with fellow caregivers, there's benefit no matter your role in the journey of memory loss.



Erin Hascup, PhD

As you'll read in this issue, powerful bonds can grow between participants. Social and cognitive engagement are an important part of brain health, and our programs can provide that value. Whether it's finding others who treat your loved one with dignity and respect, or perhaps discovering someone you can call for advice, the Smith Alzheimer's Center's programs have made those connections.

You'll also meet (or perhaps remember) two wonderful people who are making these programs shine, as well as a caregiver sharing the benefits of joining a support group. And with the holiday season quickly approaching, we'll share some advice on how to create an enjoyable time for all.

As always, thank you for reading and for your support!

CONFERENCE RETURN A SUCCESS

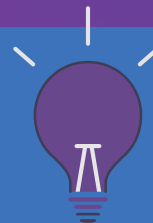
After a two-year hiatus, the Smith Alzheimer's Center's Brain Aging Conference made its return in 2022.

From the basics of Alzheimer's and related disorders, to how nutrition can affect the brain, legal planning, a caregiver panel Q&A and more, the all-day, free event gave more than 150 members of the community more information and resources to better help their loved ones. A special thank you to our gold-level partner, Memorial Health, and silver-level sponsor, AgeLinc, for their generous support in helping make this conference a reality.

We look forward to seeing you for our annual conference in 2023!

Table of contents

4 THEIR STORY
**LIKE ONE OF
THE FAMILY**



6 COLUMN
ASK A CAREGIVER

7 INFOGRAPHIC
**HAPPINESS FOR
THE HOLIDAYS**

On the cover

Stepping Up focuses on building lower-body strength to help reduce falls and gain confidence in movement. Music, chair yoga, weights, and more all make Stepping Up a lively and purposeful program.

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EDITOR IN CHIEF **AREN DOW**
PHOTOGRAPHER **BEN ROMANG**
EDITORS **REBECCA BUDDE,**
LAUREN CROCKS, ERIN HASCUP



Meet RaTasha Bradley

RaTasha Bradley leads one of the Smith Alzheimer's Center's Minds in Motion programs, which provides activities that touch all five senses and are designed specifically for those with dementia and memory loss.

What interested you in helping those with Alzheimer's and dementia?

My passions have always been in health care and education, particularly with the elderly community. Doing this work makes me feel like I am a part of an important movement towards improvements in the dementia care space.

Helping those with Alzheimer's and dementia is important to me because it allows me to advocate while focusing on abilities not disabilities.

As numbers increase, it is imperative that we reduce the stigma attached to dementia so those living with this disease and those caring for them are embraced and supported through these trying times.

What value have you seen the community outreach programs bring to patients and caregivers?

The social benefits that I have seen from those at the Beyond the Medical Center programs are improved mental and physical health. Program participants are able to interact and talk about their hobbies, careers and family, creating a more positive outlook.



Meet Lindsey Teefey

Lindsey Teefey leads Stepping Up, an exercise-based program from the Smith Alzheimer's Center. After growing up in Anna, Ill., and graduating from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Lindsey joined the Smith Alzheimer's Center this past spring.

What interested you about physical therapy?

A friend encouraged me to job shadow a physical therapist in college, and from that day forward, I knew I would really enjoy the field because it was a practical way of helping people through exercise and physical activity. I finished the excellent physical therapist assistant program at SIUC and went on to get my bachelor's in communications.

My family and I moved here in 2006 where I have enjoyed providing physical therapy in mostly home health settings in Springfield and surrounding areas. I really grew to love home health because it felt like I was empowering people to be more independent in their own homes by helping them prevent their chances of falls or injury.

What benefits have you seen from those who attend Stepping Up?

I have already seen so many benefits of Stepping Up — not only are participants learning routines to maintain mobility and strength, but they are working on balance to decrease their risks of falling. Most importantly though, I have seen community and friendships grow between classmates that are truly irreplaceable.



Like one of the family

Through outreach programs, participants have found camaraderie, compassion

It didn't take Chris Burns long to realize he found something special.

Looking for more resources to help with caregiving, Chris searched high and low around Springfield. He took a caregiver class that helped provide some information, but that only made him hungrier for more knowledge.

At one of the visits to the Smith Alzheimer's Center with his partner, Mary Ann, their clinician suggested

trying some of the Center's year-round outreach programs.

Minds in Motion hooked in Chris. He and Mary Ann became regulars and he started making compilations of jazz music for other participants to take home and enjoy. It was an opportunity to give back and show his appreciation for the programs.

"It's like you've known these people your whole life and you just met them," he said. "It's the type of family atmosphere that it is. I love it."

For 34 years, Julie Grisham worked as a nurse and clinical nursing professor in Chicago-area hospitals.

On her feet all day, she thought Stepping Up, an exercise and strength-building program, would be enjoyable. But she was attending more for her husband Tom, who suffers from memory loss.

"The class exceeded expectations because for me, I was always very physically active," she said. "I worked 12-hour days, so I felt I was pretty fit, but I found that it's still a benefit."

Building lower-body strength and expressing themselves through art and music is joyful. And having programs available from the Smith Alzheimer's Center, one of three

state-designated Illinois Alzheimer's Disease Assistance Centers, is something Julie feels very fortunate to be a part of.

But what's been transformational is creating invaluable bonds and friendships.

"We've had opportunities to get together outside of the program," Chris said. "The program's bringing us together, having another family that you can go to, somebody to talk to when you have a problem. It's beautiful.

"To have someone there when things get a little challenging and a little rough, you got several people you can go and talk to, and you get quality advice on how to deal with that situation."

Chris and Mary Ann are transplants from Chicago, and while Julie and Tom grew up in the area, few connections were left when they moved back in September 2021. Both couples joined the Beyond the Medical Center programs that same year when the programs started returning to in-person classes.

For Julie, having other caregivers like Chris to share her thoughts and observations with has been a blessing because they comprehend the toll dementia can take.

"It feels like a lifeline for us, because we really don't know anybody in the area," she said. "I moved here because I have a family member close; but otherwise, Tom doesn't have any family except our two children. Really, I can't imagine life without this."

"You got us now, don't worry about that," Mary Ann added.

For many health issues that require a caregiver, social network size shrinks. For dementia caregivers, that network shrinks further. Add in the COVID-19 pandemic and social isolation greatly increased. And while society is moving toward more social interactions, not every interaction is positive for caregivers of those with Alzheimer's.



“
*I can't
imagine life
without this.*

— Julie Grisham

on the Beyond the Medical Center programs

"It's so important to us that everyone has been so respectful and kind. Retired adults are often not valued by younger people, especially if they have any physical difficulties," Julie said. "Watching people respond to Tom's memory loss and some aphasia has been difficult, but these programs provide a place where there is understanding and acceptance."

With the opportunity to return in person, the programs have unlocked moments of connection and happiness for folks like Tom and Mary Ann. Apprehensive when first starting Stepping Up, Mary Ann now encourages others to dance and exercise. "It's a lot of fun."

For Tom, Stepping Up's use of music unlocks some of the most cherished moments from his youth. His parents were musicians, and those memories are top of mind after a class.

"When I was probably 10-12 years old, they were taking me everywhere with the band," Tom said. "They had a band that really rocked everything they had. I was in the back seat and

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Music can help calm chaotic brain activity and focus on the present moment.



A program at the Smith Alzheimer's Center, Music & Memory, provides portable music players to individuals with a memory loss diagnosis, filled with their favorite songs. Our thanks to Springfield Memorial Foundation for their support of this program.

To learn more, please contact:

📞 217.545.7204

✉ care@siumed.edu

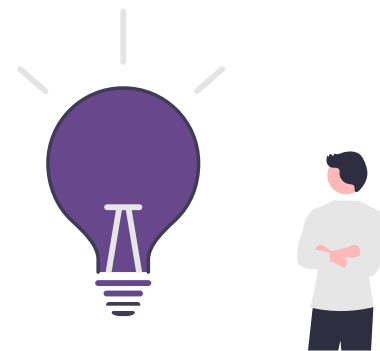
they were going somewhere. That's the kind of thing I enjoyed."

Those kinds of stories aren't uncommon. As participants share the meaning behind their drawing in Art Express or summer vacation memories in Minds in Motion, it creates a tight-knit, family atmosphere as participants invite others into their world.

"These programs give you the opportunity to get close to that person because they share something very personal. It's beautiful," Chris said. "The staff here, they bring that out of you. I feel like I gain something from each and every one of these programs."

Mary Ann nodded. "Love and happiness."

Ask a Caregiver



Mel Kuntemeier is a former caregiver and current volunteer at the Smith Alzheimer's Center's community outreach programs. If you would like to submit a question, email care@siumed.edu.



Q: I don't know what I'd get out of going to a caregiver support group. What really are the benefits?

Some of the benefits include, but are not limited to:

- A source of additional resources and information about the disease and how to become a better caregiver.
- Emotional support. A confidential gathering where you learn that, as caregivers, you may be in different boats but are ALL in the same storm!
- You learn how to better take care of yourself as a caregiver. As a guy, I had the "I don't need any help" mentality.

I now realize how dumb and dangerous that was, but it took the doctor asking what was going on that my blood pressure and blood sugar levels were going through the roof.

Not to mention my oldest son looked me in the eye and directly asked: "Dad, if you get down, who takes care of the both of you?" That was a major wake-up call for me!



Q: The holidays are coming up. How can I help make get-togethers enjoyable for everyone?

I would suggest being as open and as honest with family as you are comfortable, while preserving the respect and dignity that your loved one still deserves. You do not want to surprise or shock family members who have not seen the loved one in a while and have no clue where they are in this dementia journey.

Keep the celebrations simple. You do not need to spend days of preparing in the kitchen and hours cleaning up. If most of the folks are local, have them bring something.

If not, one of the local grocery stores may offer some holiday meal packages where you pick up and

These tips are presented by an experienced caregiver.

This information is not intended to replace treatment, care, or advice from a qualified professional.

To make an appointment with the Smith Alzheimer's Center, call 217.545.8000.

then just "heat & serve." Leftovers can be sent home with family members.

Tell family members to converse with the loved one as they normally would. Talk *with* them; not *at* them; but keep in mind that they may or may not be able to respond as they used to. Show them respect and help to preserve their dignity as much as possible. While the ability to articulate will be diminished as the disease progresses, the brain may still be processing feelings and emotions.



Q: My loved one doesn't want to do the same activities they used to. How can I encourage them?

This is unfortunately quite common and can be a tough one to deal with. Try offering to do the activity with them perhaps, or get a good friend to.

You can also look for other activities they might be interested in. Try some new things, and look at the activities at your local senior center. For example, SIU offers some programs such as Art Express, Stepping Up, Minds in Motion, etc.—all activities geared to both the loved one and their caregiver.

Happy and healthy holidays

For many, the holidays represent a time to create special moments and to reconnect with loved ones. For a person with Alzheimer's, traditions can be reassuring.

But the presence of others can also cause confusion or anxiety and not all family members may understand how to best interact. Here are some tips to help create an enjoyable holiday season.



DON'T GO IT ALONE

Caregivers already have plenty on their plate. Consider having a smaller dinner. Make it a potluck, or see what a grocery store or local restaurant may have packaged.

TEAMING UP FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Involve the person with memory loss in more simple parts of holiday preparations. Their participation may give the person pleasure in helping out, or encourage reminiscing about past holidays.



WHEN THERE'S EXTRA FESTIVE CHEER

Even in calm settings, bringing in a group of people can cause confusion or irritation. Designate a space where someone can rest or engage in a quiet distraction, like looking at pictures or coloring pictures.

HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND

Explain to others ahead of time that Alzheimer's can be more than forgetfulness; they may not always remember what is expected and acceptable. While they may not recall names, they can still enjoy company.



AND FINALLY...

Caregivers, set your own limits and be clear about them to others. You do not have to live up to expectations of relatives or friends. Your situation is different now.



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Thank you for your generosity

From researching new treatments to improving the quality of life through community outreach programs, thank you to all who have supported the Smith Alzheimer's Center mission!

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- Deborah Kuhns

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PO Box 19643
Springfield, IL 62794-9643



Forward. For finding the cure.

From evidence-based programs supporting patients and their families to ongoing research dedicated to finding ways to slow progression of the disease to training the next generation of dementia care specialists, the Dale and Deborah Smith Center for Alzheimer's Research and Treatment has big ideas, big hearts and big goals.

Your gift impacts our communities and supports our vision of better health for all. Scan the QR code to the right, or visit forwardfunder.siumed.edu/care.

Thank you.

