

BRAIN Waves

DECEMBER 2017



Inside This Issue ...

Autumn Celebration
Thank You
Events/ Activities
Leah's Notes
Memory Minute
MM Calendar
Volunteer Corner

Contact us ...

We are a ministry of
St. Paul Lutheran Church
730 County Road PPP
Sheboygan Falls
(920) 627-6847
Email: tgp@stpaulfalls.com
Web: memorymattersmost.com



Follow Us!

Quote of The Month ...

"A day without
laughter is a
day wasted."

~Charlie Chaplin

Leah's Notes ...



Leah
Zehel,
Director

We love to laugh at The Gathering Place and we sure do laugh a lot! Did you know just how good laughter is for you? Humor reduces stress hormones like cortisol that decreases memory hippocampal neurons, lowers your blood pressure and increases blood flow and your mood state. The act of laughter or simply enjoying some humor increases the release of endorphins and dopamine in the brain, which provides a sense of pleasure and reward. So indeed all our laughter is turning out to be not only a good medicine, but also a memory enhancer adding to our

quality of life. As much as laughter is important for our participants it is even more crucial for caregivers! Stress, depression, exhaustion and anxiety are common for caregivers along their journey of tending to a loved one. Over time these emotions do more damage than most of us acknowledge. "Caregiver stress is prevalent, but often the risk is invisible," says Dr. Rosemary Laird, Medical Director of the Health First Aging Institute in Melbourne, FL. "Because we can't see stress, we ignore it. But the impact to the immune system can be significant, causing caregivers to become as ill as the person they are caring for."

Research shows that not only is it okay to laugh at even the grimmest situations, it might even be good for you. Caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease

presents many painful moments, but can also present many opportunities to laugh. Laughter can be a highly effective tool for a caregiver and their family member with Alzheimer's or dementia. It normalizes the situation and helps lighten the mood, allowing for a greater connection between both individuals. Just as long as the caregiver is laughing with their loved one and not at them, humor can be a wonderful way to ease tension and enjoy the present moment together. Caregivers and friends should not be too worried that others may find their ability to find humor in situations "calloused" or "uncaring" because this may prevent them from finding joy in caregiving. Being able to laugh is not only good for your health, but it shows you have a practical, realistic approach toward

continued on page 4



VOLUNTEER CORNER

By Carol Bimmel

We just wrapped up our 8th Annual Autumn Celebration and a huge thank you goes out to our volunteers for helping make this event a success. We moved our event to The Village at 170 this year so we had to “reinvent the wheel” I guess you could say, trying to figure

out how to make the layout flow and I think they did an awesome job! We had our committee of our staff and our volunteers; Connie Oldenburg, John Lucynski, Sara Sonntag, Becca Sher, Kathy Mervar, Cheryl Tank and Carol Jerving. Then there were all the people

who helped get auction items, transfer items from church and then work the night of the event in addition to our committee. Thank you to Margaret Hand, Kelly Pfeifer, Kay Lake, Susie Comins, Mary Tryggeseth, Edson and Althea Smith, Kate Feider, Barb Baack, Julie

DeMaster, Ken Sonntag, Helen Teig, Mike Tank, Barb Dassow, Nancy Hovecar, Rich Behnke, Bill Wagner, Kohler Key Club and Abby Janke and friends. Without the help of our volunteers and friends of TGP, events like this wouldn't be possible. Thank You! ■





Memory Minute

By Leah Zehel

The Health Benefits of Socializing

In our Memory Matters group we often get off the subject, (sometimes a little too often). But the point is we are all engaging with each other, sharing stories, we are socializing! Which is what we do best, but it also is so important in keeping your mind active. Here are some of the benefits of socializing that we learned about this month:

Socializing can provide a number of health benefits to your physical and mental health. Did you know that connecting with friends may also boost your brain? If you need reasons to help justify spending extra time having coffee with a friend, or setting aside time in your schedule to connect with family, read on

Research shows these main benefits of having an active social life:

- You may live longer. People with more social support tend to live longer than those who are more isolated, and this is true even after accounting for your overall level of health.
- You will enjoy better physical health. Social engagement is associated with a stronger immune system, especially for older adults. This means that you are better able to fight off colds, the flu, and even some types of cancer.

- You will enjoy better mental health. Interacting with others boosts feelings of well-being and decreases feeling of depression. Research has shown that one sure way of improving your mood is to work on building social connections.
- You may lower your risk of increased memory loss. More recently, there has been accumulating evidence that socializing is good for your brain health. People who connect with others generally perform better on tests of memory and other cognitive skills. And, in the long run, people with active social lives are less likely to develop dementia than those who are more socially isolated.

Here are some ideas that our group came up with to boost our social engagements:

- Walk through your neighborhood and make a point of stopping to say hello to people you meet.
- Babysit your grandkids
- Sign up for a class at your local senior center, or library.
- Attend services at your church.
- Sing in a choir
- Volunteer
- Visit a museum with a friend or family member
- Participate in a neighborhood or community group
- Have a friend or family member over for coffee
- Play cards or board games with others
- Exercise with a friend, walking or swimming.

When dealing with memory loss you may find that changes to your memory make it more difficult to learn new activities, names, and routines. These changes can also make it more difficult for you to comfortably interact with others. If so, it may help to connect with people through activities that are familiar to you.

Regardless of how you go about connecting with others, remember that it should be in a way that is enjoyable to you, so that you will be sure to do it often. ■

Memory Matters Calendar

December 7 ~ Pay Attention

- *The Dangers of Multitasking*

December 14 ~ Outing, JMK Art Center

- *Christmas Celebration*

December 21 ~ Christmas Party

- *Christmas Sing-A-Long with Dan Ognevic*

December 28 ~ Closed

- *Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

Autumn Celebration Thanks!

What a great night we had celebrating at our Autumn Celebration! We had a wonderful turnout at our fundraiser, the Autumn Celebration. There was a lot of great feedback about the event; the thing I heard the most, was, "it was so nice to have more space, to sit and visit, what a beautiful set up we had." Being at our new location, The Village at 170, gave us more space for

food, Auction items, bucket raffles, and room for everyone to sit down and enjoy each other's company. Former Governor and Author, Martin Schreiber stole the show, with his message which was powerful, and really made think about living in the moment and enjoying each day to the fullest with our loved ones dealing with memory loss; and he was also hilarious, his message

was uplifting and got us all laughing! There was live music, dancing, and lots of socializing. And let's not forget about the food, once again Mark did an amazing job with a delicious spread of appetizers, a favorite of most, was the Thanksgiving sliders, too bad he is not giving out the recipe. The Gathering Place staff wants to say thank you to everyone who supported our event, do-

nated, attended, volunteered, and gave lots of well wishes and prayers for a successful event. Thank You. Without your support The Gathering Place would not be successful, and we would not be able to continue to grow our programming. We are thankful to continue to reach and help more individuals with memory loss. Thank you again for your continuous support! ■

TGP Special Events & Activities

Families and Friends are always welcome to join us for our Highlighted Events!

- December 4:** *Preschool visits*
- December 5:** *Music with Wyman Drake*
- December 7:** *Wildlife of Wisconsin Visit, Presentation with live Owls*
- December 11:** *Christmas Music with the Golden Cordeliers*
- December 14:**
 - *Family Christmas Party, join us for a special lunch, and Music with "HHT Men's A cappella Chorus"*
 - *Santa Visits with Preschool*
- December 19:** *Preschool visits*
- December 20:** *Music with Bob Welsh*
- December 25:** *Closed for Christmas*



Leah's Notes continued from pg.1

your caregiving role- and your sense of humor is a critical tool for your good health and attitude.

So as you find yourself continuing in your role as caregiver, take every opportunity to laugh. Most importantly try to enjoy your time with your family member, and if something funny happens during caretaking, don't be afraid to laugh. These moments may end up being some of the most cherished you have with your family member. ■