

On Your Mind

December 2006

**SARASOTA
MEMORIAL** 
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

A decision as important as *life* itself.™

SUPPORT GROUP

Support Group for persons with Mild Cognitive Impairment, Early stages of Alzheimer's disease and Memory Loss and their families.

Next meeting: **Dec. 21st**

Time: 9:30am

Speaker:

Lorelei Lindenaux-Balazs

Topic: Local Research Opportunities

Location: Senior Friendship Center-Center for Healthy Aging, 1900 Brother Geenen Way, Sarasota

THE MEMORY DISORDER CLINIC

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Sponsored by Sarasota Memorial Hospital and State of Florida Department of Elder Affairs

Gift ideas for caregivers and persons with dementia

Holiday gift giving can be fun for both the giver and the receiver. Listed below are a number of creative gift ideas, many of which are inexpensive or easy to make.

Early Stage-Individuals in this stage are often quite active and are aware that they have Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Many are struggling to remain independent. Gifts that enhance independence or encourage activity are excellent choices.

- Games - simple but familiar games, such as dominoes, large numbered cards, or bingo have the potential for quite a bit of enjoyment.
- Tickets to a concert, musical, circus, or a sporting event can be a fun choice. Remember, though, that your loved one may be overwhelmed by too much activity.
- Frozen homemade meals that can be reheated in a microwave are especially good gifts for couples.
- Collage - frame a collage of old family photos highlighting the major events in the person's life.

Middle Stage-Persons with moderate stage AD will require more assistance, but still remain active. Wandering is frequently seen in this group, so exercise is important. Attention span varies; activities are best limited to about 15 minutes.

- Materials to sort - coins, a bag of buttons, or large beads can be fun to sort. Men might enjoy sorting keys, nuts and bolts, or cards.
- Music, especially "old songs," often brings back wonderful memories. Check with record stores for remakes of older albums.
- A jewelry box with a variety of costume jewelry to rummage through is ideal. Low-cost items can be found at thrift shops and garage sales.
- Basket of yarn or fabric - for rummaging and sorting. Be sure to include fabrics with different textures to stimulate the sense of touch.
- Picture books - memories may be triggered by older picture books of movie stars, historical events, and nature books. Enjoy reminiscing with your loved one.

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Gift ideas for caregivers and persons with dementia

Late Stage-In the late stage of the disease, people with dementia do not have the capacity to deal with anything but the simplest of tasks. At this stage, they are "living in the past" and attention span and understanding are both very poor.

- Memory books - a gathering of old pictures and mementos from the person's past may allow them to think about and enjoy intact memories.
- Knee warmers - good for an inactive, wheelchair-bound person. Circulation is often poor at this stage, and the knee warmer or lap blanket helps conserve heat and reduce symptoms associated with poor circulation.
- Soft stuffed animals or dolls - many late stage dementia patients enjoy having a soft cuddle object to bring back a sense of comfort.
- Activity lap pillow or blanket- many late stage dementia patients need to keep their hands busy and this stimulates them through touch.
- Busy box- a great gift for men. It is a small box with several drawers, knobs and handles to keep them busy.
- Hand/body lotions - most people in this stage derive comfort from touch. Try giving a hand or back massage.

Don't forget caregivers during the holiday season. Often the best gift you can offer is your time. Sitting with a person who has dementia allows the caregiver time to run errand or just take a nap. **With patience and a sense of humor, time spent with an individual with Alzheimer's disease can be a special gift for the whole family!**

Getting the Message Out – Informational Cards to Help Caregivers when out in the Community

So often we think of Dementia or Alzheimer's disease as only memory trouble. Unfortunately, as many families and caregivers already know Alzheimer's disease and other dementing illnesses affect much more than memory. Dementias, such as Alzheimer's or vascular dementia, can also result in impairments in language & communication, decision making, reasoning, and ability to perform routine tasks. These illness also often effect behavior and personality.

These symptoms can make it difficult for caregivers to enjoy normal outings to restaurants, movies or even the grocery store. Simple decisions like ordering from a menu or finding the way back from the rest room can make such outings too stressful for individuals with symptoms and their caregivers.

Continuing to socialize and go on outings in the community is important. Outings should always be planned keeping in mind the person's level of functioning. Crowded, noisy environments can create too much stimulation and may increase confusion and agitation for the person with dementia. However, planning outings in the right environment at a less crowded time of day can work very well. This often can be made less difficult if those you interact with – wait staff, store clerks, etc. - are aware of the difficulty, and are willing to offer patience & assistance.

To assist in these situations pocket sized pre-printed cards were developed by a Lee County Alzheimer's Center, who shared the idea with our office. The card informs those who receive it that a person has memory problems and may have trouble communicating. The card also provides a space for a caregiver to put emergency contact information. In the right situation, this could provide a discreet and tasteful way to avoid some very uncomfortable situations.

If interested in receiving a set of the cards just call our office at 917-7197.

Fire Safety

Caregivers are acutely aware of safety hazards for those with memory impairments. It is a good idea to assess ones fire safety routinely making sure fire safety measures are kept in place. Smoke alarms should be working. Floridians make sure safety supplies are available for hurricanes, so add Fire Safety to the list. The few extra minutes checking for safety can save a life.

Each home or apartment should have at least one working smoke alarm on each level. Monthly check each smoke alarm. Use a broom handle to gently push the test button. If a chirping sound is heard in-between these checks, this means the battery is low and must be replaced.

Make sure there is an escape plan. Everyone should know how to get out of every room, assisted living facility, retirement center, Mobil home, etc. Practice the escape plan for the area that the memory impaired person lives. It is a good idea to keep a phone in the bedroom at night so one can call for help if not able to escape. Keeping a cell phone will be helpful if the electric goes out. Pre-programming 911 in the phone can be a lifesaver.

Memory impaired individuals who still smoke should be provided large deep ashtrays. Encourage them to place cigarette butts or cigar butts in water before placing them in the trash.

When cooking make sure any loose clothing is away from the heat by rolling up sleeves, and avoid any burn injuries by wearing mitts. Supervise or cook for your loved one avoiding fires and injuries all together.

During colder weather if using space heaters, place them at least three feet away from things that can burn. Turn them off before going to sleep or when leaving the room. Do not use timers with space heaters. These devices pull too much electricity into the heaters and can lead to possible overheating and fires.

Upcoming Events in the Community:

December 6, 2006: Arden Courts at 5509 Swift Road presents Lunch at 11:30 Seminar starts at Noon. Topic: Saturday Nite Bath- Video presentation on bathing and Activities of Daily Living. Lunch and Daycare will be provided compliments of Arden Courts. **Please R.S.V.P. by calling 925-3900.**

December 6, 2006 at 5:30pm Arden Courts hosts a Guest Speaker from the Roskamp Institute Topic: Clinical Trials and Research.

“Comedy Corner”

We know we are getting older when we find the greener pasture but we can't climb the fence.



NOTICE:

The updating of our mailing list is nearing completion. If you have not already done so please mark the appropriate response on the back page of our newsletter and return it to us by mail. Or if you prefer you may call our office at 917-7197 to advise us whether or not you wish to continue receiving our newsletter.

News Flash!

The Johnnie Byrd Alzheimer's Research Institute is now accepting research candidates

Contact Lorelei Lindenaux-Balazs MA; LMHC for details. 941-917-7197

Free Memory Screenings

The Memory Disorder Clinic offers **free memory screenings** at The Senior Friendship Centers on the 2nd Monday of every month in Sarasota and on the 1st Wednesday of every month in Venice. Call (941) 917-7197 to schedule an appointment.

Sarasota Memorial Hospital Memory Disorder Clinic Administrative Office Location

1700 S. Tamiami Trail
Sarasota, FL 34239
(941) 917-7197

www.sarasotageriatrics.com

Clinic Locations

1921 Waldemere Street
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Suite 203. Osprey