

Wisconsin Rapids aims to be dementia-friendly

It's an epidemic in the making. Dementia rates are expected to double by 2030 and triple by 2050.

How will we deal with an increasingly older population plagued by Alzheimer's disease and other dementia?

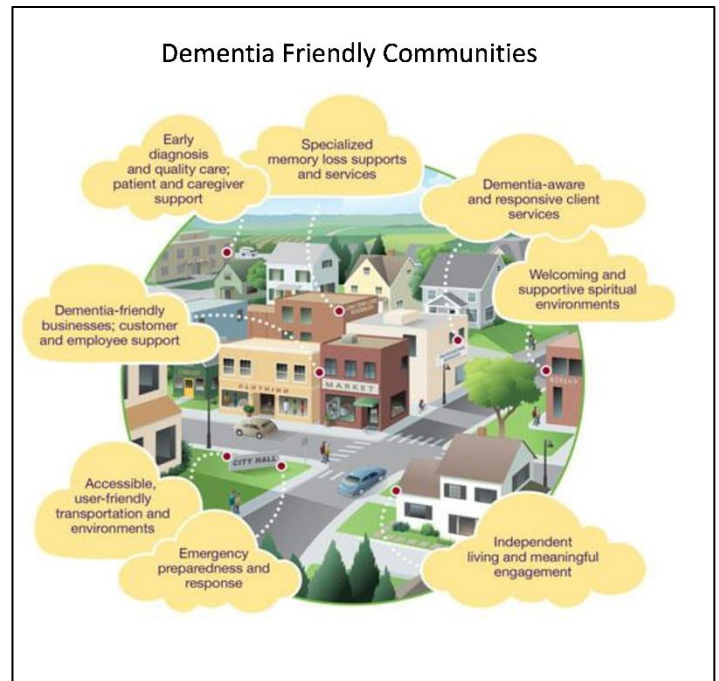
Wisconsin Rapids is beginning to figure out how we can help people with dementia and their families starting now. Aging advocates, long-term care employees, community members, business owners and leaders and others are coming together to help the community become dementia-friendly.

“Everyone here knows how challenging it is to live with someone with a dementia diagnosis,” Erin Johnson, caregiver support coordinator for the Aging & Disability Resource Center of Central Wisconsin, told participants at the Alzheimer's caregiver support group's June meeting. Living with dementia is difficult. There is stigma associated with it. People have a decline in self-confidence and tend to be more isolated. Depression increases.

The Aging & Disability Resource Center has been tasked by the state to help communities develop plans to be dementia-friendly. The goal is to create “a place where people with dementia can live a good life,” Johnson said. Dementia-friendly communities will make it easier for people to find their way around, be safe and access the places they rely on in their daily lives.

While the state has provided a tool kit to begin the process, much is left up to individual communities.

In Wisconsin Rapids, plans are underway to begin training businesses to become dementia-friendly certified. Employees will receive training to learn what dementia is, how to identify it, how to approach someone with dementia and how to have a successful interaction with someone with dementia. About 30 local businesses and agencies have been helping plan for the training, Johnson said.



Business training will begin this fall. Successful businesses will be given a window decal to display, “so you can identify from the outside if a business has gone through training,” Johnson said. A list of those businesses and agencies that have been certified also will be available to the community. Ideally, all places where people go – the library, post office, salon, grocery store and restaurants – will become dementia-friendly.

Other aspects of a dementia-friendly community include raising public awareness, conducting memory screenings and providing calm areas, that aren't busy or chaotic for people with dementia.

To learn more about the dementia-friendly community initiative, or to get involved, email Johnson at erin.johnson@adrc-cw.com, call 888-486-9545 or go to www.adrc-cw.com.

Employee spotlight

It's only been six months since Katie Haasl got a job at Hilltop, but she's been happy ever since.

The resident aide at Hilltop Alpine Terrace was working for a home care agency when the person for whom she provided care was transferring to Hilltop. She encouraged Haasl to apply at Hilltop.



As a youngster, Haasl volunteered at Strawberry Lane Medical and Rehabilitation Center. That helped her choose a career path. "I loved it and wanted to get out of the food service industry and start my career," Haasl said.

Her career path might have been swayed by her mom. "She went to school when I was 8 years old," Haasl said. She had been a stay-at-home mom, but now she's a surgical nurse. "I'm pretty proud of her and what she's accomplished," Haasl said.

Her work days revolve around the residents and her love for them. "They see me and light up," she said. "I like to bring some joy in. It's my favorite thing to see them smile."

When she's not at work, she's likely to be taking photographs, particularly of her dog, Ash. "I like to keep the memories," Haasl said.

Someday she'd like to go sky diving. "I love heights. I love roller coasters. I think I'd get a real rush from sky diving," Haasl said.

Happy Birthday

Hilltop usually celebrates birthdays with cake and bingo. Even though July has 31 days, we don't have any residents with July birthdays!

Our birthday wishes will begin again in August when Becky can make another great cake for residents to enjoy!



Alzheimer's caregiver support group

Learn about Project Lifesaver and Silver Alert with Sara McCormick of the Wood County Sheriff's Department at the July 14 meeting of the Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group.

Find out how nutrition can affect dementia at our Aug. 11 session with Andrea Wagner, a dietitian at Aspirus Riverview.

We meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Aging & Disability Resource Center in Centralia Center. Join us for a time of sharing. Call 715-423-7400 for information or to arrange free respite care for your loved one so you can attend the meeting.

Memory cafe

Memory cafes are for people with early stage dementia, mild memory loss or cognitive impairment and for family and friends of those affected.

Join us at 10:30 a.m. Friday, Aug. 5 at McMillan Library for lively discussion, refreshments, camaraderie and fun.

Call Karen Bradbury at 715-422-2795 for more information.



You've likely seen these lovely ladies at Hilltop. They dressed up 1950s style and rode vintage and vintage-style bicycles to promote Hilltop Grand Village during the Cranberry Blossom Fest Parade recently.



Hilltop hosted the City Band concert in June, with free popcorn and lemonade. It's a great, free outdoor concert!

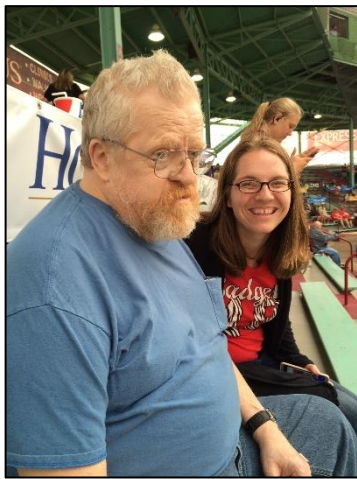


At the old ballgame

We had more than 20 residents, family members, staff and volunteers who attended the Wisconsin Rapids Rafter's baseball game recently at Witter Field.

It got awfully cloudy and rained for a little bit, but the beautiful double rainbow that arced the field was worth it.

We enjoyed excellent wait service in the accessible seating area along the first-base line. And our tickets included a free soda and hotdog. The Rafter's won 7-3.



Shelly and Jerome, above. A rainbow, right. Roscoe visits fans, above right.



Lunch by the Lake

We planned to go to Lunch by the River, but when rain canceled the event, we took our picnic to Nepco Lake instead.



Songwriting with Shelly

We love music at Hilltop. So what's better than singing? Writing your own song!

Shelly and the residents wrote this song to the tune of "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean."

I love the season of summer.

It's a good time to ride in a hummer.

And if you tip over it's a bummer.

Let's go on a picnic instead.

Chorus: Fishing, baseball, swimming and skiing are great fun, too. Fishing, baseball, swimming and skiing are fun.

I love the hottest season called summer,

But the wind and the storms can be a bummer.

The humidity will make you call a plumber.

So let's go in the swimming pool instead!

Chorus

To see a video and hear the song, go to the Hilltop YouTube channel and click on Songwriting at Hilltop.