

ENGAGE

The quarterly caregiver newsletter from AGE of Central Texas

"Tackling the challenges of aging with expert solutions"

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| www.AGEofCentralTX.org



Move It or Lose It: Innovation in Adult Day Health Care

By Nick Schiff

"We have three mantras," said Anne Stacy, the lead Activity Director for AGE of Central Texas' Adult Day Health Centers. "First: You're never too old to learn. Second: Tolerance. And last: Use it or lose it."

Anne joined AGE of Central Texas in 2013 and has helped to elevate AGE's Adult Day Health Care program with a host of fresh, vivid, and innovative activities. But despite her positivity and exuberance, what motivated her most at the start were the failures of the rest of the industry.

"A lot of adult day programs just give clients busy work," she said. "And it's not age appropriate. They give adults activities that are meant for children."

When previously working in the for-profit sector, Anne experienced groups of older adults placed in unguided "reminiscing circles," where they would simply stare off with no stimulation. She also saw adults given children's coloring books filled with cartoons.



Sometimes, she admits, our clients want to color.

"It's calming," she said, "I like to color!"

It presented a paradox: how do you make a sophisticated coloring activity for adults?

Staff responded by introducing complex Buddhist mandalas made from colored sand, block printing workshops, and drawings that corresponded to clients'

individual histories. One member, who has a lifelong interest in clothes, colors drawings of women's fashion; another, an art lover, illustrates Renaissance paintings.

"This approach is emblematic of what we do in Adult Day Health Care: clients are given activities specifically tailored to their needs, giving them purpose, meaning, and strengthening their mental health," Anne said.

The Center's members gather around a big screen to look at their childhood homes on Google Maps. They can travel the world through webcams, watching live feeds from Japan and the Galapagos. They take day trips around Texas and visit artists' studios on YouTube.



Clients began leading their own activities by popular demand. One member teaches conversational Spanish to those who want to learn. Another, a lifelong artist, teaches painting to his peers.

When activities are mature and cognitively engaging, they lead organically to discussions between the whole group about big topics: history, civil rights, media, politics, mental health, and art. Chronically quiet members have begun contributing their voices.

"Soon," Anne told me, "I realized that every day we're having enriching, deep, intellectual conversations over coffee: that's what our clients want. So why not?"

Writer Nick Schiff is the Development Associate for AGE of Central Texas.



"I drive Grandma to her doctor appointments.
I AM A **CAREGIVER.**"

Are you caring for an older loved one?

We can help. Call **512-451-4611** for free resources.

AGE of Central Texas | www.AGEofCentralTX.org

Five Things I've Learned as a Caregiver

By Lili Cantu

My father was diagnosed with dementia at the end of 2013, though as is often the case, we knew something was wrong for much longer. Now that we have had time to sit with the diagnosis, I actually consider myself the “caregiver of the caregiver,” as I am walking with both my parents in this journey. So I hope you can glean some insight from **Five Things I've Learned**:

#1: There is help available if you look for it. Getting a diagnosis was very difficult and frustrating, and we went through several medical professionals before we found the right kind of help for Dad. The process took several years and left us feeling pretty shell-shocked, so it has been wonderful to feel heard each and every time we have talked with someone from AGE of Central Texas. We have attended classes through CaregiverU, and have signed Dad up to start activities at the Adult Day Health Center and give my mom some respite. These have been huge steps in our journey.

#2: Dementia is not just a disease of memory; it affects all brain functioning. At CaregiverU's Savvy Caregiver classes, I had so many “ah-ha moments” where new light was shed on a behavior that my Dad was demonstrating. So many things make more sense now: he whispers to himself in an attempt to keep his language skills; he wears his raggedy old fleece because it gives him a sense of security; he falls asleep often because he is exhausted from his efforts to “act normal”; he can't use a key card at a hotel because his spatial reasoning is diminishing.



It is nice to have explanations for all his behaviors, and to know it's not him—it's the dementia.

#3: Expect the unexpected when it comes to how loved ones will react to the news of their diagnosis. The people you think will be the most helpful and supportive aren't always the ones to step up. We are also discovering that there are cultural differences in the reactions of our loved ones. Dad is from Mexico, where patients and family members are often kept in the dark

about their health conditions in an effort to “protect” them. Since Dad is reverting more and more to his native Spanish, and feels more comfortable dealing with people he has known a long time, some of our friends and family (who only see him a few times a year at most) haven't even been able to see that something is wrong. This has unexpectedly become one of the more difficult parts of this journey. We get a lot



of unsolicited and judgmental advice. We are learning how much and how little information we should share in order to protect ourselves emotionally. It's a fine balance! At the same time, we are learning that sometimes unexpected friendships form or deepen as people step up with appropriate responses and offers to help.

#4: Meet him at his level. As a mother and a Montessori teacher, I have found that a lot of the skills I learned in my teacher training and applied in my parenting translate very well to helping my Dad. Montessori teaches profound respect for the child, and reminds us to be respectful of every human being—no matter what capabilities they have. Dad still wants to participate in family life and feel useful, and breaking tasks into steps and giving him clear and simple instructions allows him to do so. We are also reaching the stage where reminding Dad what he has forgotten is no longer helpful, so we are learning to live in the moment with him. When we are able to meet his ability level and be in the present moment with him, we are all happier.

#5: There is still a lot to be grateful for. Dad is still with us, he still knows who we are, and he remembers his life even if he can't remember his birth date or how to figure the tip at a restaurant. I am so grateful that I live in the same neighborhood, that I can help my parents, and that my daughter has had many wonderful years with both my parents. More than that, I am finding that Dad is more emotionally available to me than he ever was in my childhood. This has given us an opportunity to heal some wounds and forgive each other for our mutual hardheadedness. I hope that you have some things in your life that you can feel grateful for, no matter what stage of the disease your loved one is in.

Guest writer Lili Cantu is a caregiver living in the Austin area.

Free Caregiver Workshops Return February 14th and April 4th

AGE of Central Texas will again host a free series of informative caregiver workshops during 2015, launching on Saturday, February 14th, with a discussion with aging expert Lisa Daly on "How to Manage Care."

Daly will present a brief overview of care managers and what they offer, how to organize and manage medications, maximizing doctor appointments and what questions to ask, how to approach caregiving, and the importance of delegating responsibilities and assembling a care team.

On April 4th, the series will continue with a round-table discussion of legal and financial issues facing caregivers and their families, led by a panel of area law and financial professionals.

Both workshop events will be held from 10:00 a.m. to Noon at the AGE Building—located at 3710 Cedar Street, Austin, TX 78705—in the Large Meeting Room. Free parking is available on the street and in the parking lot behind the building.

The free workshops will include helpful tips and expert instruction, along with resources available to caregivers throughout the Central Texas area. Free respite will also be available at the Austin Adult Day Health Center, also located at the AGE Building.

Both the workshop and respite are free of charge, but advance registration is required. For more information and to register for the February workshop, visit online at <http://tinyurl.com/agefeb2015> or call Kristy Cordes at 512-600-9275.

Free Caregiver Education Classes Now Forming in Central Texas

CaregiverU—the collaboration between AGE of Central Texas and the St. David's Foundation—is launching a new season of free caregiving classes being offered across Central Texas.

The unique CaregiverU project includes more than 25 Central Texas non-profit agencies and community organizations, joining to bring free classes offering support and resources to family members that are caring for an older loved one.

Currently, more than 70 class leaders have been trained to offer three different caregiver classes:

- **Powerful Tools for Caregivers:** six classes empowering family caregivers of older adults to give the best care possible to their their loved ones and themselves. Classes help caregivers reduce stress, establish balance in their lives, improve confidence, communicate their needs, make tough decisions, and locate helpful resources.



- **A Matter of Balance:** a fun and dynamic course that emphasizes practical strategies to manage falls and maintain an active, healthy lifestyle by setting goals for increasing activity, making changes to reduce fall risks, exercising for strength and balance, and viewing falls as controllable.



- **Savvy Caregiver:** small group discussion classes that explore the progressive impact of dementia and the skills to manage daily caregiver responsibilities with your loved one. Classes focus on developing good care management tools through group discussions, skill building, problem solving, assertiveness training, and brainstorming.



Classes are offered at no cost to participants at multiple times throughout the year at various locations in Travis, Williamson, Hays, and Bastrop counties.

For class schedules and more information, visit www.CaregiverUcentx.org

CaregiverU funding provided through a generous grant from **St David's FOUNDATION**

Get More Caregiver Resources, Delivered to Your In-Box!

Sign up for the AGE of Central Texas *Caregiver Communique*

Register with your Smart Device 



Or sign-up online at www.AGEofCentralTX.org



AGE of Central Texas is a non-profit organization that tackles the challenges of aging with expert solutions, offering programs, resources, and education for both older adults and those who care for them. Drawn from the words of our founders, Bert Kruger Smith and Willie Kocurek, our vision is to make aging a shared journey of triumph. Visit online at www.AGEofCentralTX.org or call **512-451-4611** for more information.

Adult Day Health Care

- Providing daytime care for older adults with physical or cognitive needs in the longest-operating licensed, non-residential Adult Day Health Centers in Central Texas
- Specialized in caring for individuals with memory loss or dementia
- Convenient locations in Austin and Round Rock, open Monday - Friday from 7:00 am - 5:30 pm
- Full-time nurse at each Center to assist with medication management and health monitoring
- Activities designed to engage both the mind and body including music, brain boosters, tai chi, and more
- All-inclusive: full day of activities, meals and snacks, and transportation options
- Accepting Medicaid, Veteran's benefits, or private pay at \$60 per day
- Call today for additional information and to schedule a free visit:



Austin Adult Day Health Center
3710 Cedar Street
512-458-6305

Round Rock Adult Day Health Center
475 Round Rock West Drive, #120
512-255-4865

AGE of Central Texas is an Equal Opportunity Provider

AGE of Central Texas
www.AGEofCentralTX.org

Central Office and Austin Adult Day Health Center
3710 Cedar Street, Austin, TX 78705
512 451-4611

Round Rock Adult Day Health Center
475 Round Rock West Drive, #120,
Round Rock, TX 78681
512-255-4865

Caregiver Education & Resources

- Free personalized assistance and guidance by phone, email, or walk-in
- Free educational seminars and conferences with free respite services available
- Free caregiver support group meetings every month in Austin and Round Rock
- **CaregiverU:** Free evidence-based courses for non-professional, family caregivers, offered in Travis, Williamson, Hays, and Bastrop Counties. Visit www.CaregiverUcentx.org for current schedules.



Early Memory Loss Support

- Cognitive activities and support for individuals with a diagnosis of early-stage Alzheimer's disease or memory loss
- Three weekly locations around Central Texas with sessions from 9:00 am - 1:30 pm



Health Equipment Lending

- Free loans of gently-used durable medical equipment and free incontinence products available
- Equipment available on a first-come, first-served basis
- Call **512-600-9288** or email help@ageofcentraltx.org for assistance



Peer-Based Computer Classes

- Peer-to-peer technology instruction with personalized coaching assistance for adults (ages 50+)
- Low-cost classes and seminars on topics ranging from basic computer skills and brain fitness to advanced software and photo editing. Visit www.AGEcomputer.org for current class schedules.