



*Treatment and Support for  
Families Affected by  
Alzheimer's and other  
Cognitive Impairments*



## **Caregiver Network News**

*A newsletter for caregivers of loved ones with dementia*

### **SCHEDULE CHANGE!!**



MemoryCaregivers Support Group  
North Asheville Group

**FOR DECEMBER ONLY--**

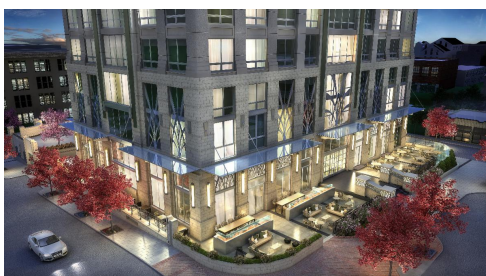
This group will meet on

**Thursday, December 19th** from 1:00-3:00 pm

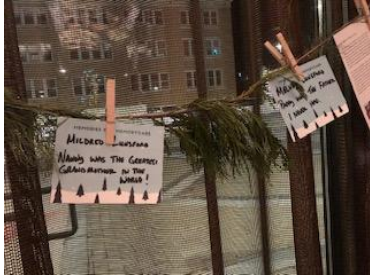
Newbridge Baptist Church

199 Elkwood Avenue and Merrimon Avenue, Asheville NC 28804

## **HOTEL ARRAS MEMORY WALL**



For this holiday season, Hotel Arras has created a Memory Wall in their lobby where guests can share memories of their loved ones and donate in support of MemoryCare's work with families. We are honored to be chosen as their local nonprofit of the season!



*Stop by Hotel Arras in downtown Asheville to share your memories for the Memory Wall and help support MemoryCare!*

**Thank you for your generosity!**

## NEED A GIFT IDEA?

At MemoryCare we rely on donations for half of our operating budget each year. If you have been touched in some way by our program or know a caregiver or someone with cognitive impairment, please consider making a financial gift to MemoryCare.



Memorial and tribute gifts are wonderful ways of commemorating an anniversary, a birthday, or a holiday and can be a way to say “thank you” for a special kindness. Planned giving through bequests, trusts, insurance policies, IRAs, annuities or other mechanism can offer a way to ensure organizations you care about will have resources for years to come. Please consider including MemoryCare in your will and estate planning.

Every gift – no matter the form – helps us serve families whose lives are affected by dementia. If you would like to discuss giving options, please contact our Development Assistant Liz Grieco, at (828) 771-2219 or [grieco@memorycare.org](mailto:grieco@memorycare.org)

[Donate Now](#)

## CREATE "THE STORY OF ME" BOOK



The holidays are here again – and for many of us, that means getting together with loved ones we may not see often during the rest of the year. But when a family member is living with dementia, the holidays can also be a time of stress, disappointment, or even sadness as the changes in Mom or Dad become harder to overlook. Families are sometimes at a loss for how to handle the situation: do we just ignore it, and go right on with business as usual? Or can we still make happy holiday memories even when dementia is in our midst?

This might be the perfect time to create "The Story of Me" book – a chronological history of your loved one told through pictures and stories that the entire family collects and organizes. Similar to a family photo album or scrapbook, it can also include letters, postcards, certificates and other memorabilia. Not only does it create a visual diary of a loved one's life for posterity, it also

presents an ongoing project the whole family can undertake.

Perhaps most important, "The Story of Me" also offers your loved one a way to reminisce, something that is usually a positive and rewarding activity for a person who is losing their sense of the present. And as it becomes increasingly difficult to engage Mom or Dad in family conversations, the book can serve as a valuable replacement as well as a real and ongoing means of staying connected as words and memories fade.



Many families find that their loved one with dementia tends to be more comfortable in the past instead of the present. Why is this?

- Memories formed from earlier in life are stronger because the brains that formed them were stronger. Conversely, recent memories (say around the last 10-20 years) were formed when their brain may already have been experiencing decline from dementia. Therefore, not only is the memory itself less intense, the brain's ability to retrieve it is weakened.
- Having dementia means living with ever-increasing confusion and uncertainty. Their world is becoming unfamiliar. Because their brain doesn't process information like it used to, even a "normal" day in the present can be distressing to a person with dementia. On the other hand, familiar thoughts and memories from long ago, when the world made sense and things felt "right," can be much more comforting.

Even if the person with dementia cannot participate verbally, they can still enjoy hearing or seeing reflections from their past through pictures, stories, and memorabilia offered in a tangible form. Having these memories readily accessible can also serve as a means of comfort and reassurance if the person is experiencing stress from too much stimulation or noise – a welcome island of something familiar in a sea of confusion.

Keep in mind, however, that while reviewing past events can provide a sense of peace and happiness, it can on occasion stir up painful or sad memories. It is important to be sensitive to the person's reactions if this happens. Help them through an emotional moment by offering empathy ("Yes, Dad, I know you miss her") and allowing them to talk about it ("Tell me how you met – it was while you were in the Army, wasn't it?"). Observe them closely – a few tears are normal and can be therapeutic, but if their distress seems to be causing anxiety or agitation, it may be best to move along to a happier story or picture to help them recover. A person with dementia can remember feelings even when they may not remember what caused them, so be sure to leave the reminiscing activity on an upbeat note.




A large photo album with plastic protective sheets over each page will last indefinitely and can withstand a lot of use. Each photo needs to be labelled to avoid putting the person with dementia on the spot with questions such as "Who is that?" You can use an ordinary 3-ring notebook or find books or albums at scrapbooking and craft stores – just remember to keep the pages simple. It is best to limit the information on each

page to one topic, and to have only one or two items on each page. Include as many

photos of the person as possible, particularly those showing him having a good time. While you may have access to more recent items, remember that things from the past will likely spark more recognition.

The following list may help in getting a book started:

- The person's full name, preferred name, and photo from childhood or early adulthood on the cover, i.e., "Dave's Life Story." You may think of him as Dad or Grandpa, but remember that those designations came later in life – his younger self is probably more recognizable to him than that balding man with glasses.
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- Place and date of birth
  - Photographs and name of mother, father, siblings – remember, one to a page.
  - Photographs of partner and wedding day
  - Photographs and names of children and grandchildren
  - Photographs of family friends, relatives and pets
  - Places lived
  - Schooldays
  - Occupation and war service
  - Hobbies and interests
  - Favorite music
  - Holiday snapshots and postcards
  - Miscellaneous memorabilia such as certificates, awards, report cards, letters, etc.
  - Diagram of family tree (keep it simple) and short stories about specific incidents (funny ones are best!)

Keep in mind that the goal of this book is not to *make* Mom remember everything, but merely to give her the chance to remember what she can. Creating "The Story of Me" book can be a fun and meaningful holiday project for your family, and at the same time bring a great deal of pleasure and pride to a person who may be feeling increasingly bewildered in the present.



## Caregiver Tips

My wife has early-onset dementia. We regularly travel a few hours away to visit our kids, which she enjoys although she is no longer able to help with any of the details. The last

time we went, she kept packing and unpacking the suitcase which made it impossible for me to keep up with everything – some of it I've never found! So this time, I put a suitcase out in plain view with a few of her things in it (things that she actually doesn't use any more), while I kept the "real" suitcase out of sight in another room. She could pack and unpack to her heart's content, and it didn't matter if any of it was lost – I had everything we needed in the "real" suitcase! When we arrived at our destination, I unpacked everything into the closet and drawers in the guest room and put the suitcase out of sight. This out-of-sight-out-of-mind technique has all but eliminated our things getting lost...although I do bring along a couple of small familiar items from home to leave out in the room (i.e., a small pillow or stuffed animal) that can be easily replaced if they should turn up missing.

Having a "mock" suitcase for her to pack made her happy because she had something to do, and it made me happy because I didn't have to worry – a win-win situation!



## Notable Quotable



"O, wind, if winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

- Percy Bysshe Shelley

## Give!Local

MemoryCare is grateful to be a part of this year's Mountain Xpress' Give!Local campaign which runs through December 31st. Click below to find out more about the campaign, how you can support us through it, and the incentives for donating!

[Give!Local 2019](#)



Ongoing Programs  
Open to the Public



# MEMORYCAREGIVERS NETWORK

Peer Support & Education Groups

## FLETCHER GROUP

First Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Fletcher 7th Day Adventist Church  
Howard Gap Road and Naples Road, Fletcher, NC  
(just past Park Ridge Hospital)

## NEW HOPE GROUP

Third Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

New Hope Presbyterian Church  
3070 Sweeten Creek Road, Asheville, NC 28803  
(across from Givens Estates)

## NORTH ASHEVILLE GROUP

***FOR DECEMBER ONLY! This group will meet on  
Thursday, December 19th from 1:00-3:00 pm***

Fourth Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00pm

Newbridge Baptist Church  
199 Elkwood Avenue and Merrimon Avenue, Asheville NC 28804  
(enter at glass doors adjacent to the gym)

**Network meetings are open to the public.**

The Network relies on charitable support to keep its program going.

TO MAKE A DONATION, [CLICK HERE](#)

**For more information about the MemoryCaregivers Network, contact:**

**Mary Donnelly**  
828.230.4143  
network@memorycare.org

**Pat Hilgendorf**  
828.301.0740  
patricia.hilgendorf@gmail.com



## **"Caregiver College"** MemoryCare's ongoing education series for caregivers

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Caregiver College is a series of six lectures containing crucial information for anyone caring for a person with a memory disorder. The program is taught by a MemoryCare physician, and is designed to improve caregiver understanding of different aspects

of dementia care.

Related presentation materials will be provided.

There is no cost for families who are enrolled in MemoryCare. For those not enrolled, the cost is \$180 for the 6-part series. Scholarship funds are available, let us know when you register if you require scholarship assistance.

**Registration is required, and space is limited.**

**To register, please call our office at 828.771.2219**

**Course Content:**

What Is Dementia?

Transitioning from Independence to Interdependence  
Functional and Behavioral Changes of Dementia

Dementia Treatment Options & Risk Reduction

Caring for the Caregiver  
Dementia and Legal Planning Issues

**Caregiver College is held at**

**SECU Center for MemoryCare**

**100 Far Horizons Lane, Asheville**

*(located on the campus of Givens Estates off Sweeten Creek Rd)*

***The next Asheville session of Caregiver College will begin Spring of 2020:***

- **March 19th** - What Is Dementia?
- **March 26th** - Transitioning from Independence to Interdependence
- **April 2nd** - Functional and Behavioral Changes of Dementia
- **April 9th** - Dementia Treatment Options & Risk Reduction
- **April 16th** - Caring for the Caregiver
- **April 23rd** - Dementia and Legal Planning Issues



**Do you need a program for a group event?**

The MemoryCaregivers Network staff presents on a variety of subjects, including Recognizing Early Warning Signs of Memory Loss, Facts and Fiction about Dementia, Better Communication Techniques, and more.

We are happy to speak at your event to raise awareness and knowledge about Dementia.

To see a list of  
**OTHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

[CLICK HERE](#)

*Caregiver Network News* and The MemoryCaregivers Network are auxiliary programs of



[We rely on charitable donations to continue these programs!](#)

Please consider donating...  
perhaps in honor of a loved one's birthday...  
or a memorial...  
or a sustaining gift to support families like yours  
who depend on the services that MemoryCare provides!

Make a difference. Make a donation.  
[Click here to donate.](#)

Thank you for your interest and support!



is a charitable non-profit organization whose mission is three-fold:

To provide specialized medical care to older adults with cognitive impairment;  
to support caregivers with education, counseling, and improved access to services; and to provide  
community education.

*Caregiver Network News* is written and edited by Mary Donnelly.  
Contact [network@memorycare.org](mailto:network@memorycare.org) for more information.

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[CLICK HERE to visit our website](#)