



Quarterly Newsletter

Loneliness and Social Isolation in Dementia

By Meghan Velasquez



Did you know that many people with dementia experience heightened risks of loneliness and social isolation? Memory loss can have a profound impact on our social connections. It is more than forgetting names or faces. It is losing precious moments and experiences. Few people living with dementia have meaningful friendships outside of their own family.

Studies have shown that factors such as living in residential care, poor health, reduced mobility, and cognitive impairment can all contribute to feelings of loneliness in individuals with dementia. The impact of loneliness on those with dementia is profound and often heartbreaking. It can exacerbate the symptoms of the condition and lead to a decline in overall quality of life. The risk factors for dementia, including social isolation and depression, further highlight the urgency of addressing this issue.

But what causes loneliness and isolation? The causes are varied but some reasons might be fear of what others may think. It is difficult to maintain friendships and some people struggle with how to communicate or interact with individuals with a dementia diagnosis and will therefore just not interact at all thinking that may be better. As social interactions become more difficult, their support network gets smaller and smaller. Soon, their only relationships are reduced to whom they are related. Lack of activities and engagement could be another factor that affects someone living with dementia and increase their feeling of isolation and loneliness, whether it be due to their lack of confidence in their abilities to complete the task or a missed opportunity, but no longer doing things they enjoy increases loneliness.

So how do we help our loved ones combat these feelings? Most of you are already on the right track by enrolling them in a day program where they can feel their sense of belonging and community again. They are able to build friendships, participate in meaningful and engaging activities, all outside their home and with people they are not related to. You can also reach out to a close family friend, or someone from church or the community that you trust and set up opportunities for them to socialize and engage with. Having open conversations with friends regarding your loved one's abilities and suggesting activities they can do and how to best interact and engage can be reassuring to someone who may not know or feel confident in their ability to engage with someone with memory loss.

It's crucial that we work to alleviate the impact of loneliness on individuals with dementia. By promoting social connections, providing support for those living at home or in residential care settings, and addressing mental health needs, we can help improve the quality of life for those affected by this condition.

WHO WE ARE

We are an innovative day program for individuals in early to mid stages of Alzheimer's disease and/or other related dementias.

STAFF

Program Manager:

Meghan Velasquez

Site Coordinator:

Nora Munoz

Program Assistants:

Teresa Flores-Lopez, Maria Garcia, Dolores Perez

CONTACT INFORMATION

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CAREGIVER
RESOURCE CENTER

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

From the University of California at Los Angeles comes “Healthy Years: Helping older adults lead happier, healthier lives.” Monthly, \$39.00 per year, several sections of particular interest including a “News Brief” column with latest developments in medicine, plus in-depth articles on topics such as “Heart Attacks Associated with Accelerated Cognitive Decline,” “Understanding Senior Moments,” and “Exercise Slows the Aging Process.” For subscriber information write to: Healthy Years, P.O. Box 8535, Big Sandy, Texas 75755-8535 or call toll-free at (866) 343-3144.

Chock full of timely information, all written by experts in the field. *****

Small Steps to Making a Big Difference

By Meghan Velasquez

Looking for a way to make a big impact without breaking the bank? Look no further! With just a \$25 gift card, some holiday candles, a handmade quilt, or a bottle of wine that you never used, you can help us continue to make a difference in the lives of others. Your small donation can add up and make a huge impact on our fundraising abilities. Get involved today and give back in any way you can! Our Celebration of Care fundraiser is just around the corner and we need your help in gathering raffle and silent auction items. Contact Meghan Velasquez to find out more and learn how you can help us continue to help others. Let's work together to continue to support our aging community!



What we need:

- Gift certificates
- Gift cards, from fast food to fine dining
- Services: hair, nails, massages, home repair
- Vacation get-a-ways, cabins, beach, hotels
- Sporting event items: memorabilia, tickets
- Themed baskets: coffee/tea, spa, alcohol
- Jewelry and watches
- Cash donation

Upcoming Events

- **Sing-a-long with Anita**
Every Thursday
10:00am-11:00am
- **Music with Matthew Embry**
Friday August 9th, 2024
3:00pm-4:00pm
- **Alzheimer's & Dementia Support Group**
1st Monday and 3rd Wednesday of every month
10am-11:30am
- **Staff Development**
Friday August 23, 2024
1:00pm-5:00pm
Program will be closed for the afternoon session

Newsletter Staff

Lynne Rayner
Editor

Meghan Velasquez
Editor & Design

Staff Spotlight- Michelle DiBuduo, Executive Director

By Lynne Rayner

Michelle DiBuduo, who has led Valley Caregiver Resource Center as Executive Director for 13 years, is someone who has spent most of her life doing some kind of volunteer work, so when she heard about VCRC when her mother and father were ill, she became involved. She says she “saw how our seniors were being treated without respect and dignity” and felt “challenged to educate the community on these issues.” Without a doubt, this is truly a description of what Michelle does every day and does it in a calm voice with her ever-present smile.

Her goal for the program in general is to have as many people as possible know about and use the services that VCRC provides. For the OASIS Adult Day Program in particular, because so many people are dealing with dementia, the effort is twofold. First is to provide the caregiver time to rest and perhaps do personal errands, but as Michelle says, “giving the person with dementia a place where they feel safe and valued” is also crucial. The second part then is to get as many of these people as possible “into a program that is filled with activities, life, and friends,” The best way to do this is for OASIS clients to share their experiences with others.

Michelle oversees the three other parts of VCRC (CRC, HICAP and the Ombudsman program) so it is a job that keeps her very busy, but her 65-member family, who all live in Fresno except one, are really important to her. Spending time with them is what “refuels” her. Her seven grandchildren alone, ages 2 to 19, provide her with many activity choices to observe like college softball, basketball, baseball, or little gym. She personally gets involved when it’s pickleball!

Coming from an old Italian family, originally from Bari, it’s not surprising that food is another one of those ties that keep the family together in get-togethers of from 30 to 50 people. Staples like lasagna and pizza are augmented by such favorites as cardoni soup, orecchiette, mustard greens, and eggballs, which are meatballs without meat. She also says that her mother’s sauce is a prerequisite.

A favorite trip was to Italy to see where her family originated, where her grandparents had lived, and “seeing their hometown and eating foods prepared like we do. They love so unconditionally and never questioned if I was family even though they had never met me before.”

This also seems like a good description of Michelle herself. Meghan Velasquez, Program Director of OASIS, gives her high praise when she says that not only is she “dedicated to improving the lives of the caregivers and their loved ones,” Michelle is “truly a mentor. She cares about her staff on a personal level and wants to see us succeed individually beyond our careers at VCRC,” a quality that carries over into her personal life so that “from children to grandchildren to even her nieces, they all look up to her and cherish their relationship with her.” It sounds a lot like those good genes from Bari, Italy, have been passed on!



Recap- 11th Annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser

By Meghan Velasquez

Another year, another successful golf tournament in the books! From free bloody marys to a sold out event, it was an amazing day on the green. We want to thank everyone who came out and supported this event. Every year we are amazed at how the community comes together and makes this event one for the books. But our work isn't done yet - as a non-profit, we depend on fundraisers like this to support our cause. If you missed out on the golf tournament, don't worry - there's still time to make an impact at our upcoming gala in Greece. Join us for a night to remember and help us continue making a difference in our community!

PLEASE JOIN US

Valley Caregiver Resource Center Presents a

GREEK GALA

October 18th, 2024 – 6:30pm

Clovis Veterans Memorial District
808 Fourth Street, Clovis, CA 93612



COME JOIN US FOR A STUNNING EVENING IN GREECE

Immerse yourself in the sights, sounds and flavors of Greece with delicious food, drinks, and exciting silent and live auctions. Get your tickets now and join us for a night to remember!

TICKETS:
\$150 PER PERSON

A SPONSORSHIP...THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

For more than 36 years, VCRC has been a dedicated advocate in preserving the health and quality of life for seniors and family caregivers. Your generous sponsorship will make it possible for us to continue these valuable services and benefits over time.

**BUY TICKETS
BECOME A SPONSOR**

FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

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