



OASIS

Adult Day Program

Quarterly Newsletter

Our Mission

By Meghan Velasquez
Program Manager

Caregiving is flat out tough. The roles and responsibilities slowly creep up on you and most of the time you don't realize the impact it has until you have reached some sort of breaking point. You go to countless doctors' appointments discussing your loved one's health and symptoms. You go to lunch with your sister and she asks how mom is doing. You attend church on Sunday and the pastor stops and tells you that your mom is in their prayers.



As a caregiver it is easy to get lost in the responsibilities of caregiving.

But, then one day there is that one person that looks you in the eyes and asks "How are YOU?" and you simply freeze because it has been so long since you have truly thought about yourself you are almost too scared to really answer the question.

That's where we come in. At OASIS Adult Day Program, we have the goal of not only providing a fun and inviting environment for your loved one but to also see you as a person and turn the focus back on you and your happiness. Often caregivers come into my office in moments of defeat and aren't sure where to turn. They have been on this path alone for so long that they don't know what it will look like to get a break or time away, let alone know what they will do.

Their to do list is a mile long, yet I reassure them that they will have plenty of time to check those items off of their list. Right now, for that first time, they can drop their loved one off and do something for themselves, whether that's taking a nap, getting a massage or meeting a friend for lunch.

Just, breathe.

When individuals receive a dementia diagnosis they often lose their sense of community and belonging. Their friendships are harder to maintain, conversations are difficult to keep up with and the isolation begins. As the confusion sets in, it is easier to withdraw than face the vulnerability head on. I love watching a person walk in to OASIS and sit down with the group for the first time and see them come alive again. There is often hesitation at first but a few Jeopardy questions in and they are right where they belong. As I watch them laugh I can see the tension dissipate from not only the participant but the caregiver standing next to me. Little by little OASIS becomes their second home. The laughter is endless, the loneliness starts to dwindle away and a sense of belonging overcomes any doubts or fears.

I often brag how lucky I am being a staff member at OASIS because I get the best of both worlds. I love the opportunity to welcome new members to our family here and I love seeing some of the weight being lifted from the caregivers. You don't have to do this alone, we are here.

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 Assistant
Dolores Perez

CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Manager
Meghan Velasquez

Phone Number
(559)224-9121

Email
mvelasquez@valleycrc.org

A program of

valley
CAREGIVER
RESOURCE CENTER

Staff Spotlight

By Lynne Rayner

The OASIS program has two main purposes. The first is to offer a place where people who are experiencing “early to mid-stages of some type of Alzheimer’s” or “other dementias” can spend part of their day making friends and engaging in enriching activities. The second is to provide respite or a much needed break for their caregivers. Finding a person who can manage both is not easy but Valley Caregiver Resource Center (VCRC) did just that when they hired Nora Muñoz as the Site Coordinator for the OASIS program.

Prior to OASIS, Nora enjoyed working with people in a nursing facility in Fresno and got additional working experience in retail when she moved to Roseville, but a desire to be closer to her home in Sanger, brought her to Fresno and VCRC where she found her job at OASIS, a job she “loves.” The reason why seems obvious because she enjoys talking to her “regulars,” or welcoming people who are coming for the first time. Talking to them is important, but she also says, “I love interacting and listening to our participants’ stories” because “they brighten up my day and put a smile on my face.”

She returns the favor and puts smiles on their faces by carrying out one of her most important responsibilities, which is to create and plan the activities for the clients in the program. It requires a great deal of creativity because she is working with people from many backgrounds, interests, and experience. She plans and revises her activities with that in mind in order to help provide families’ loved ones with the opportunity to socialize and have fun while doing that and give families “the peace of mind knowing their loved ones are well cared for during their stay.”

In looking to the future, she says. “I have faith that OASIS will grow and will continue to further help our families” because she believes that this service is very much needed in our communities. In the meantime, she says, “cherish those precious moments with your loved ones and be kind.”

If you are in the OASIS office stop and introduce yourself, but if you don’t see her there, you might have to look for her in her kitchen trying out new recipes or on the tennis court with her sisters. If that fails look for her with two big dogs – Silver, a Husky and Maui, a St. Bernard, who might be sitting on her lap!



Upcoming Events

- **Matt Embry Music Performance**
Wednesday, December 14th
2pm-3pm
- **Christmas Caroling- People's Church**
Monday, December 19th
3pm-4pm
- **Alzheimer's & Dementia Support Group**
Wednesday, December 21st
10am-11:30am
- **OASIS Christmas Celebration**
Thursday, December 22nd
2pm-3pm

Newsletter Staff

Lynne Rayner
Editor

Meghan Velasquez
Editor & Design

Those Amazing (and Stress-filled) Holidays!

By Lynne Rayner



Most people enjoy the winter holidays but stress can be just around the corner in the most loving of families. Holidays can highlight old grudges or disagreements after a little too much eggnog. Differences in political and religious issues often become explosive within minutes. If you add the factor of a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer's then the stress level can be elevated. Questions like "Will he remember our traditions?" or "Will everyone be patient and understanding" abound. If you are the host or hostess you may be concerned about managing the situation to make sure everyone has an enjoyable day and how to do that. It is often easier said than done, but here are a couple of ideas that may be new for you to try or perhaps fine tune.

Problem behaviors on the part of the person with dementia are a major concern in many families and in their book *The Complete Family Guide to Dementia*, the authors Thomas F. Harrison and Dr. Brent P. Forester identify three major reasons for these: confusion, unmet needs, and delusions. Add to that the person's inability (often) to communicate these needs clearly so that they can be addressed can add another level of stress, so an important factor here is that you know the person very well, not just the person they were but the person they have become, and you may be able to second guess what they need or want. Under the circumstances, use your inner "crystal ball" and try to predict ahead of time what kinds of needs might arise (the need to take a rest) or how confusion and delusions might manifest themselves.

As you probably already know, it is often very difficult to put yourself in the other person's place and see the world from their point of view, but based on your past experience, it might help to make a list of the things that could be upsetting for them, things like too much noise, too many people in a small area, children and/or animals zooming around, or even a change in environment. Then think about any successful techniques or strategies you have used in the past to relieve, or better, to avoid, their anxiety and have a family meeting so that there is a communal approach to the issue. Make a plan and post it where others can easily check it, and most importantly, involve the other people who will be with you for the holiday. If everyone is on the same page (your plan) it should help create a feeling of security, not only for your loved one, but for all. Consistency and continuity can be very important to making your day go pleasantly for everyone.

Another tip is, and this is only if it doesn't raise the person's anxiety level, perhaps talk to your loved one ahead of time and talk about the event and what the plan and schedule is. (Yes, it is very helpful to have a realistic schedule for your event(s). That is also a kind of security blanket.) Is there a way to involve your loved one in the planning? Based on the person's abilities, are there tasks like folding napkins or wrapping gifts, that she can do which would make her feel useful and part of the festivities, not just a bystander? Does/did she have interests that could be woven into your activities? Making cookies from a simple recipe or premixed dough and decorating them comes to mind if she enjoyed baking or artwork, but making sure she has all of the utensils or materials she needs is important. Keep them handy for her and easy to see and use. Outside activities are also possible. Could someone take him for a walk? Would he read to some children? Are there chair exercises he could do? Brainstorm with your family and see what other things you have done in the past that eased the tensions in events like these. You have probably done much more than you realize.

If you tried any of these ideas and they proved helpful – or not – please write and let us know. In the meantime, Merry and Happy All of the Winter Holidays, including the New Year!

Bibliography
Harrison, Thomas F. and Brent P. Forester, MD. *The Complete Family guide to Dementia: Everything You Need to Know to Help Your Parent and Yourself*. The Guilford Press, 2022.

Wonderlin, Rachel with Geri. Lotze, PhD. *Creative engagement: A Handbook of Activities for people with Dementia*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020.

Tips on Transition

By Meghan Velasquez
Program Manager

Adult-day programs have many purposes and benefits. They help keep their participants engaged, stimulated and social which can improve their overall quality of life. Day programs also provide close supervision which can help reduce falls at home and prolong placement needs. Beyond the benefits to the participant it also helps reduce stress and pressure on the caregiver themselves.



But how do you get your loved one to agree when hesitant and how can you make the transition to this new environment as smooth as possible?

First visit the center together. Take the time to sit with them and enjoy the activities, make sure it doesn't feel as if you are trying to "get rid of them". Maybe they have a friend that would benefit from the program as well or would be willing to volunteer and help your loved one feel more comfortable and at ease about attending. The more you learn about the staff and the attendees the more you can talk about them at home and help your loved one become more familiar with what goes on there.

Try not to refer to it as "daycare" but a coffee or social club. They are adults and like to continue to be treated as one. Focus on the fun! Highlight the social aspects and downplay the care side of things. If your loved one is worried about losing their independence try to adjust your approach. Ask them if they would like to "volunteer" or go and help others.

When everything else doesn't seem to be working simply be open and honest.

Ask your loved one to do it for you. You want to see them have fun and get out of the house but you also need some help to do things that you need to get done. The transition can take up to a month for some but try to be consistent, positive and encouraging. Close communication with staff is key to a smoother transition for everyone. Nothing can stop the changes that comes with a dementia diagnosis and overall aging but day programs can help slow the progression and increase quality of life.

4 Holiday Tips for Seniors

- Find ways to include them. Think about new ways to get them involved.
- Try to maintain their schedule and routine. Consistency can help improve their experience.
- Help them decorate their home. It helps remind them what holiday is occurring.
- Be aware of safety risks in unfamiliar homes. Look for things like rugs, cords or trip hazards.

valley CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER

OASIS
Adult Day Program

Alzheimer's & Dementia Support Group

Know that you are not alone!

This group offers:

- A chance to freely share your feelings in a safe and secure environment
- Socialize and connect with fellow caregivers
- Gain insight and ideas from others going through similar journeys

First meeting will be

December 21st, 2022
10am-11:30am
5363 N. Fresno St.
Fresno, CA 93710

More information contact:
Meghan Velasquez
(559)224-9121
mvelasquez@valleycrc.org

*This group will continue to meet every 3rd Wednesday of the month

valley CAREGIVER