

Welcome to our Newsletter for July 2024!

Engaging
Dementia

We are excited to announce a special event for the summer. On July 25th and August 15th we will be hosting 2 sessions with the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City.

These events are free to attend, but please email admin@engagingdementia.ie to register.

MEMORY CONNECTIONS

Memory Connections is a free program for people living with dementia and their caregivers. Each month, trained teaching artists and special performers facilitate an online experience designed to promote engagement between participants and the art and cultures of the Himalayan region.

The program includes an hour of close looking, discussion, and interpretation of traditional and contemporary Himalayan art. Our experienced teaching artists present objects from the Museum's collection in a way that is stimulating and interactive, encouraging conversation among participants and cultivating community.

Major support for Memory Connections is provided by the Mellon Foundation with additional support from The Frederick P. Lenz Foundation for American Buddhism.



We were also pleased to receive an article from a volunteer at our recent conference in May:

Engaging Dementia Conference, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, 8th and 9th May 2024 – a Volunteer's Perspective by Ann-Marie Kilgallon

I was a volunteer at the Engaging Dementia conference in Mullingar on 8th and 9th May. Engaging Dementia is a charity, established in 1990 by Sr Mary Threadgold. It is a small organisation, now 34 years old. It is especially known for developing the training called Sonas aPc, which assists people living with dementia to improve their life experience.

I volunteered at the conference because I had heard about it from a friend, was curious because it felt person-centred and I thought I could use my people and communication skills in a way that would help a worthy cause. I have a background of living with a person with dementia. Engaging Dementia was working with a team of volunteers coordinated by Michelle on their team. Several volunteers joined the conference from the Westmeath Volunteer Centre and there were some volunteers, who were training and involved in education in the area of dementia study.

I really enjoyed volunteering at the conference. I loved the variety of people I met and the atmosphere at the conference. I loved the collaboration between organisers and volunteers and the general feeling of collaboration and camaraderie in evidence between all different types of people and participants in the audience from academics, health care professionals, people living with dementia, service providers....to volunteers.

In a nutshell, **I wanted to write this article** to generate **awareness** about what I saw at the conference, to let people know about the sector of people living with dementia, those within the sector and the state of the knowledge, work and ideas generated from within this sector and space.

I believe we all know a person living with dementia and it is important and a great privilege to know more about their experience.

One highlight was when some people living with dementia, performed the original song **“We Will Tell Everyone”** at the end of Day 1. A Patient Public Involvement group wrote the song in collaboration with Lisa Kelly and Carl Corcoran.

Performers included **Kevin and Helena Quaid, Gerry and Nuala Paley, Helen Rochford-Brennan and Carmel Geoghegan.** They had the stature of opera singers and performed with pride and pleasure for the rest of us –it was a very moving and emotional experience to witness this. These are amazing people – **leaders**, and are doing a lot of good for other people coming behind them and for their sector.

On Day 2 I also especially enjoyed the presentations from **Kevin Quaid** about **walking the Camino with a Lewy Body** diagnosis and the Irish Dementia Working Group members **who presented on “Rights made Real”, Kathleen Farrell and Catherine Murphy.**

Among other things, they talked about their experiences in going to the hospital and encountering some staff that do not know what Lewy Body Dementia is or even Alzheimer’s.

Kathleen shared: “I was terrified” (when she had to go into an ambulance to the A and E; she was worried that people would not know about her dementia or how to interact with her).

Kevin: “Is it a big ask? I don’t think so.” To the question about having one dementia nurse specialist or more to be able to talk with people/patients with dementia and also with their family.

In conclusion, I was amazed at how well everyone worked together and at the warmth, and complementarity of the energy. It was a lovely group of people and I think it had everything to do with the sector, with the fact that were working with people with dementia. It all stemmed from that. The vitality, self-possession and nous of the **people there living with dementia** was a sight to admire, was inspiring and had great dignity within it.