

## Alzheimer Society of Calgary 'Person Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia'



### Final Report

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Person Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia project was established to increase the capacity of Opening Minds through Art (OMA) – an art therapy program benefiting people with dementia (PWD). The Community Innovation Grant Initiative enabled the Alzheimer Society of Calgary to train 32 individuals representing Adult Day Programs, long term care facilities and organizations with dementia programming, to deliver the art program at their own facilities on an ongoing basis. Previously, only one individual in Southern Alberta was able to deliver the art program (Alzheimer Society of Calgary's Director of Adult Day and Creative Programs) and therefore its capacity was limited. Despite its limitations, OMA's effectiveness was evidenced over a 3-year period during which the program was facilitated at Club 36 – the Alzheimer Society of Calgary's Adult Day Program for PWD.

OMA is an intergenerational art therapy program designed to increase the psychological and physical wellbeing of people with dementia. The program, created by Miami University, Ohio, focuses on the strengths of the PWD and empowers them in a failure-free art activity, building in the artist a sense of self-worth and pride. When logical thinking and verbal expressions are impaired, creative ability remains. Volunteers from a younger generation work one-on-one with PWD over a 6-week period and build meaningful relationships. During the art making process, the volunteer provides guidance and support but not aesthetic direction. The program helps alleviate social isolation, promotes a sense of independent thinking and reduces stigma.

Organizations selected to receive training were chosen based on their ability to successfully facilitate the OMA art program at their organization. In addition to receiving OMA facilitator training, the Community Innovation Grant Initiative also enabled participating organizations to receive Best Friends™ Associate training (a person-centered, best practice approach to dementia care delivered by the Alzheimer Society of Calgary) to help build their professional skills and enable them to train their own volunteers in working with PWD through the OMA art process.

The OMA art therapy process includes the following steps:

- The recruitment of younger volunteers /students to partner with PWD through the art process
- Providing Best Friends™ Approach training to volunteers to help build their skill level in working with PWD
- Developing an art process that will be failure-free to empower PWD
- Matching volunteers to PWD
- Creating opportunities for volunteers and PWD to work one-on-one together over a 6-week session organizing an art show at the end of the session to showcase art created during the program

Evaluation of the Person Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia project:

- Quantitative and Qualitative Data (in accordance with the Evaluation Framework) was collected from stakeholders involved in the project, and was used to measure short term successes of the initiative. The collection and analysis of medium- and long-term metrics are part of an ongoing process, because the timeframe in which newly trained OMA facilitators can begin facilitating OMA at their own organizations is dependent on factors such as management support, resources and funding for the program.
- The initiative successfully equipped participating organizations with the knowledge and tools to deliver OMA at their own organizations on an ongoing basis. Although the Alzheimer Society of Calgary is

providing limited support to help participating organizations get started in their facilitation of OMA, the organization is ultimately responsible for ensuring its ongoing success.

Return to Person Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia and click on [“Evaluation”](#) for more information.

Return to Person Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia and click on [“Client Stories”](#)

## OBJECTIVES & IMPLEMENTATION

The Person-Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia project is a capacity-building project, intended to achieve the following objectives:

- To promote social engagement, self-autonomy and dignity of people with dementia by providing creative self-expression opportunities;
- To increase the capacity of Adult Day Programs, long-term care facilities and organizations with dementia programming to provide evidence-based, person-centered art therapy to PWD
- To give staff and volunteers of a younger generation opportunities to build close relationships with people with dementia
- To demonstrate through public exhibitions of OMA artwork, that people with dementia are capable of creative self-expression

Phases of implementation of the Person-Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia project included:

- Recruiting 32 representatives from Adult Day Programs, long term care facilities and organizations with dementia programming from across Southern Alberta. During this phase candidates were required to submit application forms, detailing their interest, qualifications and ability to implement the OMA program following completion of training; the Alzheimer Society of Calgary reviewed applications and selected participants based on their suitability for the training and ability to deliver OMA on an ongoing basis; selected candidates were then informed of their selection, and an information session was provided at Alzheimer Society of Calgary offices in January 2017 to help prepare candidates for their training, set expectations and answer any questions.
- Providing Best Friends™ Associate training to the 32 selected candidates prior to receiving OMA facilitator training. This training enabled candidates to learn valuable skills to help them work with PWD.
- Providing OMA Certified Facilitator training to the 32 individuals by trainers from Miami University, Ohio. Collecting data (quantitative and qualitative) from trainees, PWD and volunteers through surveys and questionnaires
- The Alzheimer Society of Calgary collaborated with Bow View Manor – a long term care facility in NW Calgary – to provide a suitable venue for the Best Friends™ and OMA facilitator training.

## IMPACT FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

As a result of the Person-Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia project, 32 representatives from Adult Day Programs, long term care facilities and organizations with dementia programming in Southern Alberta received Best Friends™ Approach and OMA facilitator training and are now equipped to deliver OMA on an ongoing basis. 460 PWD have so far been engaged, and the initiative holds the potential to benefit a far greater number of PWD as facilitators continue to roll out and deliver the program at their various organizations. Initial data collection and evaluation shows high levels of satisfaction from stakeholders including trained facilitators and PWD.

Evaluation data collected to date demonstrates the successful achievement of the short term outcomes, as described in the Evaluation Framework:

Short-term outcomes:

- PWD experience increased social engagement, feelings of autonomy and dignity
- PWD experience an increase in positive emotions as a result of the OMA project being delivered
- OMA Facilitators (staff and volunteers working for Adult Day Programs, care facilities and organizations with dementia programming) benefit from increased dementia knowledge and communications skills.

Medium-term outcomes:

- PWD experience increased social connections and decreased social isolation
- The dementia care community benefits from enhanced knowledge and skills to deliver a person-centered care for PWD
- Staff and volunteers have opportunities to build close relationships with impacted seniors the general public develops appreciation and respect for the abilities of PWD

Long-term outcomes:

- Volunteer, student and public perceptions and attitudes have shifted (from the person as a passive care recipient to an equal partner/teacher/artist)
- The dementia care community has greater capacity to serve PWD
- PWD build self-esteem and confidence, and are treated with dignity and respect

Return to Person Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia and click on “[Client Stories](#)”

Contact [seniorshealth.scn@ahs.ca](mailto:seniorshealth.scn@ahs.ca) for a copy of the Person Centered Art Therapy for People with Dementia Final Report.