

The Town of Stony Plain - Dementia Connections - Final Report

Executive Summary

The Dementia Connections program is a community-based response to dementia support in the communities of Spruce Grove, Stony Plain and Parkland County. The Town of Stony Plain received financial support from Alberta Health Services (Community Innovations in Dementia Care) to develop the Dementia Connections program over the past two years. The project was also supported by the Westview Dementia Support Community Collaborative including representatives from Alberta Health Services, the Alzheimer Society of Alberta & NWT, the Town of Stony Plain (Community & Social Development), the City of Spruce Grove, Parkland County, Westview Health Centre, Westview Primary Care Network and individual residents.

Dementia Connections aims to create a community champion volunteer program that connects people living with dementia to resources and community. All involved work together to co-design recreational and social programs that they want to see offered in the community. This program includes three components: engaging volunteers, including people living with dementia and offering dementia friendly social opportunities.

From 2020-2022 the program offered:

- Art classes
- Friendly visiting
- Memory Café
- Walking group
- Training & educational workshops
- Care partner support group
- Community connector for dementia service navigation

14 community volunteers were trained. The program connected with 279 people living with dementia and their care partners. 102 participants attended the dementia friendly programs.

Objectives/Implementation

The team organized, developed, and marketed the Dementia Connections Program. Specific objectives included:

- All three regions represented by attendees.
- Evaluations completed by participants and volunteers and collaborative partners
- Align activities to grant objectives
- Five community members trained as community champion volunteers
- 50 persons living with dementia (PLWD) and their care partners are provided support and services
- 150 PLWD receive information and referral and invited to participate
- Provide educational opportunities for volunteers
- Provide social engagement opportunities for participants
- Positive experience for program attendees



Resources:

3 part-time staff committed to this project: Project Manager, Project Support and Community Connector.

Areas of focus included:

- Offering individual supports through the Community Connector including dementia service navigation. The connector assisted 230 Tri Region residents living with dementia and their care partners from Nov 2021- Aug 2022. This service provided direct individual supports.
- Building connections: Programs included Trail Explorers Dementia Friendly Walking Group, History Explorers, Memory Café and Creating Connections. The programs offered recreational activities for people living with dementia and their care partners supported by trained volunteers and facilitators in the Tri Region. These programs had direct input from residents living with dementia and easily shifted based on needs.
- Shifting perspectives and increasing awareness: The Project worked on increasing awareness about dementia and the challenges people living with dementia face. This project offered community awareness sessions like Let's Talk Dementia for families living with dementia and Understanding Dementia geared for local service providers. It was also possible to host the Living the Dementia Journey, an award winning, evidenced based program to the region. This included recruiting and training a community volunteer who was the facilitator. Work also included offering community presentations about the project to interested service agencies and communities of practice. For both years of the project, it was possible to highlight Alzheimer's Awareness Month in January, again with the goal of increasing awareness and shifting perspectives. Activities included offering learning sessions to the public, social media campaigns to raise awareness and a meet and greet in a public setting between service providers and the public. Both the public and service providers indicated this was a very positive experience and offered ways to connect and learn in a casual setting.
- Renewal/revival of the WestView Dementia Collaborative: The Collaborative is a network of community organizations and members who share their experiences with the aim to sustain well-being of people living with dementia in the Tri-Community Area (Town of Stony Plain, Parkland County and City of Spruce Grove). Members of the Collaborative come from various community, non-profit, health, social service, and community, bringing diverse life and work experiences to share. The Collaborative is a forum for collaboration, support, problem-solving, learning, and celebrating success. Within the last two years the group has co-created a resource list relevant to the local region and shared information and problem-solving at a systems level to reduce barriers for people living with dementia and their care partners.

Impact

The project objectives were reached and went beyond what was anticipated. During the fall of 2022, the team asked volunteers and care partners of people living with dementia to describe their experience with the Dementia Connections program. Seven care partners, five volunteers and nine members of the Westview Collaborative responded through a combination of online surveys, telephone interviews and in-person reflection. Volunteers said that their experience met or exceeded expectations. 100% of survey respondents agreed that "as a result of volunteering with the Dementia Connections program, I am more involved in community events or activities" and "more knowledgeable about dementia." Most respondents (80%) also agreed that "I feel that I can make a difference." Care partners of people living with dementia said they appreciated the activities and supports. It felt good to know that their loved one was in the company of people who cared and understood the complexities of living with dementia. The team also heard about ongoing needs for awareness, acceptance, accessibility, practical supports, program ideas and social connection.

The Dementia Connections Project continues to connect, support and share as the members of the program work to create and maintain an inclusive and welcoming community.