

BUSINESS, BROOKLYN STYLE - ADVERTISEMENT

Support, fun for dementia caregivers

BY CAMILLE SPERRAZZA

New York Memory Center is a freestanding, nonprofit, community-based agency that provides services to adults who are diagnosed with memory loss, as well as their families.

Founded in 1983, under the name Park Slope Geriatric Day Center, the facility offers cognitive support to those who need it.

New York Memory Center has also provided caregiver support since being founded. And a grant from the New York State Department of Health now enables it to reach out to a much wider community of caregivers beyond the families it serves at its social adult day program — specifically those that may be somewhat lacking in support.

Megan Christ, Caregiver Social Worker of the Family Resource Program, says the center offers caregivers coaching, coordination of services, educational workshops, and wellness programs that include nutrition, yoga, and tai chi. In addition, the facility co-produces the Memory Arts Cafes, a series of free cultural events for caregivers and people living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

Currently, many of its wellness programs include onsite respite, which allows caregivers who register for a class to bring their loved one for care or an activity if they do not have alternative care available at the time of the class.

It's all designed to give caregivers a chance to de-stress and to meet other families who are sharing similar experiences.

"Family care is not always addressed," says Christ. "This gets people connected, and helps them with what they need."

The Family Resource Program reaches out to communities, including Bushwick, Bed-



Memory Arts Café in Brooklyn Botanic Garden (August 2016)

ford-Stuyvesant, East Flatbush, Sunset Park, and Red Hook. There are programs in Spanish and in Creole.

"We are currently providing a six-session bilingual Creole-English Family Caregiver Education series at SUNY Downstate's Center of Excellence for Alzheimer's Disease with the Alzheimer's Association New York City Chapter," she says. Details can be found at <http://nymemorycenter.org/programs/family-resource-program-2/>.

The Memory Arts Cafe is co-produced by poet-in-residence Gary Glazner, who acts as host of these special events. Each program features local professional guest artists that include musicians, magicians, poets, and dancers. Glazner may lead an exchange of ideas to create a group poem. Participants have visited places such as the Botanic Garden, where in the Shakespeare Garden, they recited lines from *The Bard*. Recently, the organization held a chocolate-making and tasting at Mast Brothers in Williamsburg that was capped by the creation of a chocolate-themed poem. Events like these are held about eight to 10 times per year, says Christ, and are designed to bring some laughter and joy into people's lives.

After all, it is important for

caregivers to take care of themselves, too.

Christ says she has seen how these programs make a difference in people's lives.

"The feedback from families is that it has been very helpful," she says.

The New York Memory Center continues to provide core services to adults in its day care programs. Two sessions are offered each weekday: 9 am–3 pm, and 2 pm–7 pm. Lunch or dinner is served, depending upon the session attended.

Transportation can be arranged to pick up participants in their homes and bring them to the center, where they will be engaged in memory and cognitive learning skills. Costs for attending the social adult day program can be covered by Medicaid Managed Long Term Care Plans or private long-term care insurance. Private program costs are based on a sliding scale.

All caregiver support services under the Family Resource Program are free of charge.

New York Memory Center [199 14th St. between Fourth and Fifth avenues in Park Slope, (718) 499-7701, www.nymemorycenter.org]. Open Mondays through Fridays, 9 am–7 pm. Follow it on Facebook. E-mail: MChrist@nymemorycenter.org.