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115 WOLFE STREET  
WINCHESTER, VA 22601

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Art on the Brain



# NEWSLETTER

• SUMMER 2007 •

ADULT CARE CENTER  
OF THE NORTHERN SHENANDOAH VALLEY, INC.  
115 WOLFE STREET • WINCHESTER, VA 22601  
(540) 722-2273



“So many of us go through life like tourists with a camera always between our eyes and the world. I find myself more visually sensitive [with Alzheimer’s]. Everything seems richer: Lines, planes, contrast. It is a wonderful compensation. We can appreciate clouds, leaves, flowers as we never did before.”

– Morris Friedell<sup>1</sup>

## Artistic Creation

for Alzheimer Therapy

by Alexa Waugh-Quasebarth, BA

**A**rtistic creation and therapeutic use for probable Alzheimer’s and associated dementias is receiving a great deal of research attention lately. An intriguing symbiotic relationship between the creation of art and brain processes of people with these diseases is forged. We at the Center are utilizing some of this research to facilitate a journey to find “within the rubble...buried something that shines and glows and is worth bringing into the light.” In this journey, our clients have brought some amazing discoveries and products ‘into the light.’<sup>2</sup>

### THE BENEFITS OF ARTISTIC CREATION

The discovered social, cognitive, and emotional effects of art creation for patients are quite striking. The creation of art provides a sense of value and worth for a client who may no longer be respected in a society of industry and production. When words may not be the easiest way to express oneself, art is a medium for personal expression and communication through non-verbal means. Artistic creation allows for open decision making that many clients with dementia are stripped of in most other aspects of their lives. Artistic creation simultaneously provides an unregimented process in which exploration is encouraged.

Creative action can redirect negative emotion, reduce wandering, and aid in the focus of attention and memory recall. Creative process also provides caregivers with a “cognitive x-ray” of the client, where confusion or physical issues may manifest themselves more clearly through increased interaction. These psychological effects clearly have their grounding in the functioning of the brain. Research shows notable sharp increase in theta brain waves present in the process of creative activity, the same

brain waves present in REM sleep. Increased theta brain waves lend to an increase in T cell production, aiding in the strength of the immune system of the patient.

### ENCOURAGING ARTISTIC CREATION

Despite the benefits of artistic creation to clients, many caregivers may note that the client was never artistic before the onset of the disease and ask why would she want to create art now?

Artistic creation is inherent in children but often abandoned for a higher prioritized skill in our society. Therefore, many people are left at a grade school skill level in art, remaining at the same ability through their lifetime, just as if one stopped reading in second grade. Every person is capable of evolving artistically with revisitation to the practice. Clients are prime candidates for the reexploration and evolution of artistic ability as a prioritized life skill.

The function of the brain plays a role in artistic interest. “Whatever the visual part of the brain did before was suppressed by the brain functioning as a whole.”<sup>3</sup> At the Center, we attempt to remain mindful of the functions of the brain in relation to the entire process. Perhaps the ability to create art in a new way has to do with compensation for a loss in another part of the brain or that brain regions that once stifled creativity are now lost as a result of the disease. The creation of art engages many different parts of the brain and may draw on the strengths of each client’s brain. In addition to the function of the lobes of the brain, evidence suggests that many skills related to art creation are housed in our procedural memory. Procedural memory (knowledge of skills) is housed in the cerebellum and basal ganglia. Declarative memory (knowledge of facts) such as names or places or time, is housed in the hippocampus. The hippocampus is generally the first part of the brain to be effected in Alzheimer’s. The cerebellum and basal ganglia, where procedural memory is thought to be housed is more gradually affected as the disease progresses in the late stages.

*Continued on next page*

### Artistic Creation continued

Through this selective degeneration, new skills concerning art may be learned throughout the course of the disease.

### THE CENTER'S APPROACH TO ARTISTIC CREATION

In the creation of art at the Center, we attempt to employ some theoretical principles concerning independence and equality. Like many other art classes, our sessions are structured loosely. A facilitator conceives a project and chooses the initial medium for the participant. However, the execution of the project and the media used are completely controlled by the participant and his or her ideas and actions. Initiative and self-evaluation are typically diminished as the brain's frontal lobe deteriorates, therefore assistance with these primary steps in beginning the project is usually required. Process is primary to product, but final product is important to the continued interest in the piece and pride in one's abilities and being. Ability to accept lack of realism and spatial relationship without forcing an end result are necessities for a facilitator. The client's reality is both acknowledged and respected. An attempt to interpret the thoughts and feelings of the client and their process risks the possibility of misinterpretation. As caregivers of patients, our goal is to assist our clients with their journey of new experience and awareness, and to support their resiliency in the face of the unknown.

*Do not go gentle into that good Night*

*Old Age should burn and rave at the close of day*

*Rage, Rage against the dying of the light.*

*- Dylan Thomas*

1 Morris Friedell is a man diagnosed with probable Alzheimer's in 1999. He sought to study his disease as he progressed with it, sharing

## Rubbermaid Sale

TO BENEFIT

THE ADULT CARE CENTER - UNITED WAY

**Saturday, August 25, 2007**

**8:00 am - 12:00 noon**

**Belk Parking Lot, Apple Blossom Mall**

## A Note from the Board President

Dear Friends of the ACC,

As you see, this newsletter features art therapy at the Center, and the upcoming Art Show of work done by the Center participants. We hope you will take time to see these remarkable and beautiful paintings and pottery.

I'd like to take this opportunity to point out the ACC is far more than a babysitting service. We are fortunate to have two music therapists, Tara Lescalleet and Jocelyn Hunt, who plan and direct the participants' day. In addition to art therapy there is a broad spectrum of other therapeutic activities—music, Tai Chi, exercise, horticulture, games, aromatherapy, cooking and therapeutic touch—from which the daily activity calendar is created. Each one provides different forms of mental and physical stimulation, and helps stimulate one or more of the five senses. Participants have told me they are always getting up to move from one area to another for different activities. Well—don't tell them—there is a reason for that too.

The Center in Winchester is on the cutting edge in the use of alternative therapies and received federal grants in 2002 and 2004 to study methods of incorporating these into adult care programs. Michael Rohrbacher, Ph.D., MT-BC, the Associate Professor and director of the music therapy program at Shenandoah University, has just completed a monograph with the findings from the first grant on music therapy. So, while the activities at the Adult Care Center are fun, and (sometimes) games, they are far more than something just to fill the time.

I will close as I did in the last newsletter: as a friend of the Adult Care Center, thank you for your support and help. If you know a caregiver whose family member would benefit from the Adult Care Center program, please pass this newsletter on to them, and for both their sakes, encourage them to call the Center.

Diane Shipe, Ph.D.  
ACC Board President

RAFFLE

To benefit the Adult Care Center

14 Kt. Yellow Gold Lady's

**Ruby and Diamond Ring**

The ruby is an oval cabochon, measuring 7.5 mm x 6 mm

**Appraised Value \$1,995**

**TICKETS: \$5.00 EACH OR 5 FOR \$20.00**

*(Only 100 tickets to be sold)*

**Drawing on December 1, 2007**

## Dance to the Music of "JUMP ALLEY"

A great Jazz/Swing Band

Adult Care Center Fundraiser

**Saturday, October 27**

**Where: Travel Lodge**

**8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.**

**\$20 per person**

**includes hors d'oeuvres**

Call 540-722-2273

For more information or to reserve your tickets!

### THE ADULT CARE CENTER

The Adult Care Center is a day program for adults unable to stay by themselves due to conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, stroke, and others. The Center offers an array of recreational and therapeutic activities for participants, as well as routine medical monitoring by a registered nurse.

The Center also offers a resource library and support group meetings for caregivers. The Center is licensed by the Virginia Department of Social Services, is a Medicaid Provider, and is a facility approved by the Veteran's Administration.

## Support Groups

### ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS

3rd Tuesday of each month

7:30 pm to 9:00 pm

Cancer Center Conference

Medical Bldg 1

Winchester Medical Center

Facilitators: Loretta Dunn, LCSW,

Charles and Billie Casey

### CAREGIVER'S SUPPORT

Call Dana Ankers, RN, Adult Care Center to schedule a visit.

540-722-2273

JOIN US FOR

## Art On The Brain

### LOUDOUN STREET GALLERY

First Friday, October 5, 2007

6 to 9 pm

125 S. Loudoun St. Mall

Winchester, VA

*Featuring art work and ceramics made by Adult Care Center participants.*

The collection will also be displayed at  
**VIRGINIA NATIONAL BANK**  
186 N. Loudoun Street, Winchester  
OCTOBER 15 though November 2, 2007

## ADULT CARE CENTER

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