

Forget-Me-Not Spotlight

A Loving Voice –

A Caregiver’s Book of Read-Aloud Stories for the Elderly

Edited by Carolyn Banks and Janis Rizzo

(A review by Shannon Nosbisch, C.D.P., co-founder of Effingham Area Alzheimer’s Awareness)

Carolyn Banks began to think about writing a book of read-aloud stories when she worked in an adult day care center.

Some of her clients were recovering from strokes and others were in some stage of Alzheimer’s disease. Her job was to entertain them and to interest them in activities.

She started reading stories and poems aloud to them and could see that the read-aloud experience was something that mattered to them and they enjoyed. Perhaps it invoked their early memories of being read to as a child by a parent, sibling or teacher.

Sometimes she found that a descriptive passage would evoke a memory. They would start talking or they would laugh. She also found, through personal experience with her mother-in-law when visiting her in the nursing home, reading aloud would be something that would make the visit more enjoyable for all.

Since the materials for read-aloud stories were hard to come by, she enlisted the aid of Janis Rizzo, a free-lance journalist, who had struggled when caring for her father when his capacities were diminished. Together they consulted eldercare experts on types of stories to include.

As a result, the stories in “A Loving Voice” include a broad range of material. There are snow stories and hot weather stories, stories about golf and fishing, food, rural settings and urban settings. There are rugged adventure pieces, as well as romantic and sentimental stories.

Try reading aloud some of these stories to your loved one and see if they enjoy them and if you can make a connection with them. Encourage their memories about similar situations in their own lives. It is a starting point that may produce moments that are enjoyable for both of you.

This resource is available at the Effingham Public Library, Flora Public Library, Evans Public Library, Newton Public Library, Greenup Township Public Library, Shelbyville Public Library and the Mattoon Public Library in the Forget-Me-Not Resource Center. If you do not have a library card, ask at the main desk how you can check it out.