

Becoming a Dementia Friendly Community

By: Amy Sobrino, MSW, LSW

This month marked a milestone for Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness. We officially began training local community businesses with our 'Friends in Rural Places: Creating Dementia Friendly Communities' workshops. Since you will likely be seeing the Dementia Friendly Community Member stickers around town, I wanted to share a little more information about how the Dementia Friendly movement began, and what it means for our local area.



As part of a family who cared for a person living with dementia, we understand the need for a dementia friendly community. In the early stages of Alzheimer's disease or other dementia, people can still do their banking, grocery shopping, and other activities in the community. At times, they may need a little support and help in completing their tasks or getting to where they want to go. The Dementia Friendly movement began out of addressing this need to help support people living with dementia remain active and

independent in their homes and communities. Between 70-90% of people with dementia live at home.

Originating in the United Kingdom, there are now Dementia Friendly Communities in Europe, Australia and other countries. In 2015 at the White House Conference on Aging, the Dementia Friendly Community Initiative was started. There are numerous communities in America starting the process of becoming a Dementia Friendly Community.

Dementia-Friendly Communities are places where individuals living with dementia:

- Are able to live good lives
- Have the ability to live as independently as possible
- Continue to be part of their communities
- Are met with understanding
- Are given support when necessary

Dementia Friendly Communities are ones that enable individuals living with dementia to:

- Navigate successfully
- Access local businesses and community sites that are familiar and known
- Maintain social networks and sense of belonging

The Friends in Rural Places training provides valuable information about dementia, and instruction on how to best alter staff's approach from a customer service perspective to support people living with dementia. We also give ideas on how to modify the physical

environment to be supportive, and offer opportunities for the business to continue supporting people affected by these diseases through special programming or events. Dementia friendly business is good business! It will help retain existing customers and employees and attract new ones.

To become a Dementia Friendly Business, staff and management participate in a free thirty minute in-person training session, and receive ongoing support. Management and at least 50% of frontline staff are required to participate in the training. Each business must be open to discussion regarding environmental changes to enhance accessibility and safety, as well as commitment to share training with new hires. For more information about these training opportunities, contact Shannon Nobsch at 217-663-0010 or email eaaa.shannon@gmail.com.

For more information about Memory Moment articles & Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness, check out their website at www.effinghamalz.org. If you are a caregiver & have specific questions or situations you would like information on, please feel free to call Shannon Nobsch at 217-663-0010 or Amy Sobrino at 618-363-8372.