



FORGET-ME-NOT SPOTLIGHT

Reminiscence Toolkits

For those of you who have visited the new Forget-Me-Not Resource Center at the Effingham Public Library, you might have seen various sizes of plastic tubs, holding a variety of items ranging from cooking utensils to fishing lures. Each of the tubs, what we call 'Reminiscence Toolkits', have a collection of items related to a specific hobby. At the Resource Center, you can find toolkits on beauty, sewing, cooking, fishing, farming, and gardening. Reminiscence toolkits have been increasing in popularity as a means of connecting with a person diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. As the dementia progresses, a person diagnosed with the disease might find it difficult to have meaningful conversations or stay interested in previous hobbies. These toolkits help families and caregivers start a conversation with their loved one with a multi-sensory approach. An example of the power of reminiscence I always share occurred while I was working in a nursing home, caring for people with late and end-stage Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. Arnold was one of the residents who although always smiling, was very quiet and never talked. I knew that Arnold had grown up on a farm as a boy, so I decided to use a toolkit focused on 'farm life'. As I was showing photos of farmers during planting season, wives hanging up clothes to dry, I began to share with Arnold about how my own family was beginning to plant soybeans this week, and that we were praying there would be no rain. Much to my surprise, Arnold began talking about his experience with farming. Although short and brief, this conversation and connection mattered to Arnold, and helped him remember a meaningful part of his life. There are suggestions on how to use the toolkits inside each one. Our hope for families using the reminiscence toolkits is to remember that these special moments are still possible, and that these toolkits are there to help remember old and create new memories. Please check one out and see how it can help you share a moment with your loved one.

By Amy Sobrino

Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness