

Memory Moment: Forget-Me-Not Café

By: Amy Sobrino, MSW

Feet tapping and bodies swaying back and forth to the tune of local musicians. Drinks flowing and hot food being served. Laughter and fun is setting the mood. Sounds like just another weekend night at Tuscan Hills Winery right? Yes, but you may be surprised to know that this scene also plays out the last Tuesday of every month from 12-2 pm. On this day, the Forget-Me-Not Café meets to enjoy each other's company, eat lunch, and enjoy some live musical entertainment or other activity. The Café is specifically for caregivers and/or family members and loved ones with early to middle stage Alzheimer's or related dementia to enjoy an outing and not worry about the disease. Dementia often makes it difficult for families to enjoy social outings. The disease slows the processing of the brain which can make the simple act of ordering a meal challenging because there are too many options and too much stimulation from the hustle and bustle of a restaurant atmosphere. For the Café, Tuscan Hills offers a smaller menu to help with this issue and also reduces the cost. Another barrier that families face is a stigma of the disease. A person with dementia may feel embarrassed that they are unable to function in a social situation and may begin to avoid those experiences. People who are unfamiliar with the disease may not recognize common symptoms and unknowingly cause extra anxiety and stress. The Café creates an environment where a person with dementia and a caregiver can feel comfortable not having to worry about behaviors of the disease because everyone attending is fighting the same battle.

According to one of the participants, she notices how much her mom enjoys the entertainment and visiting with the other participants. Her mom looks forward to the Café each month. The sense of community at the Café is evident.

If you are interested in learning more about the Forget-Me-Not Café, consider stopping by to join us for an afternoon of entertainment and community. Brought to Effingham by Jackie Witges and Willowbrook Memory Care Homes, there is no charge other than purchasing a meal. The Café runs on donations of time, talent, and resources. If you and your family have any questions about the Café, please call Jackie Witges at 217-663-0970.

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