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## Re-Membering Matters - Letter to the Editor

Mille Lacs Messenger (July 22, 2015)

Imagine not remembering where you live, how to make a phone call, not knowing your own children's names. Imagine your lifelong partner looks at you with eyes of fear because he or she no longer recognizes even you.

The heartbreak of dementia is real and it is increasingly prevalent. The Alzheimer's Association estimates there are 89,000 Minnesotans age 65 and older with the disease and thousands more with other dementias. The disease also touches nearly 250,000 family members and friends who are caregivers. And it is here, in our own Mille Lacs Lake community.

Whether experienced firsthand or through the lives of loved ones, Alzheimer's and other dementias change our lives dramatically, often leading to emotional stress, caregiver burnout, isolation and out-of-home placement.

Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs is a local effort to raise awareness about Alzheimer's and other dementias, seeking to improve early identification, reduce stigma, and build stronger community supports for those on a dementia journey.

Our vision is of a community where all persons, regardless of their cognitive capacity, are valued members of the community. Hence our title, "Re-Membering Matters," refers to our belief that remembering can actually mean reconnecting or rejoining, i.e. Re-Membering means restoring being a member. A community that is not connected together is fragmented and broken, with missing pieces and missing pathways, not unlike the life experience of someone with dementia as they become disconnected from others and their own memories, etc. Efforts to reconnect people are thus important, Re-Membering actually matters. It is about restoring relationships, a sense of home and belonging. Our hope is to rebuild "full, participatory membership" of our community members with dementia by identifying, creating and fostering intentional community connections and pathways, as well as by removing barriers caused by fear, stigma, ignorance, and/or inability to respond in helpful, supportive ways.

We are not alone. With the support of an ACT on Alzheimer's grant monies and technical assistance (funded through Blue Plus, the Medica Foundation, and Greater Twin Cities United Way and administered by the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging), Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs is one of 34 community based efforts in Minnesota.

This past year our local initiative gathered input from many voices in the north end of Mille Lacs County, helping to develop our current work plan to raising awareness and provide education throughout the area. Our work crosses all community sectors, as dementia knows no bounds.

We are currently recruiting volunteers to be trained to offer free trainings throughout the area on these topics: The Basics - Understanding Memory Loss, Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease; "Know the Ten Signs" Early Detection Matters; and Advanced Planning and Health Care Directives. We will also be bringing other resources, in person, written and online, to the community soon.

All are welcome to be part of our Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs community initiative. For more information, contact our coordinator, Kathy Young, IREC, (320) 676-1050, [kyoung@isle.k12.mn.us](mailto:kyoung@isle.k12.mn.us).

As one Mille Lacs area community member whose life has been touched by dementia in more ways than one, I can readily encourage all to start seeing those with dementia for who they are and not just for whom they are not. Persons with dementia are still persons. They still live, laugh, cry, feel and love. Words, language, recognition and memories come and go, but the heart and soul continues. Love changes, but it never really ends.

Written by Sue Lyback LSW, Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs Action Team member

## Taking Action:

The Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs Action Team is in full force in making northern Mille Lacs area communities become more Dementia Friendly. The action team has three coalition members, Fr. Greg Poser, Karrie Roeschlein, and Sheriff Lindgren, who have become Dementia Champions and will be holding Dementia Friends trainings for the Faith communities, Business, and Law Enforcement in the near future.

The action team has also been looking for four community volunteers to receive a four hour training to then present presentation to the communities of Isle, Onamia, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, Government, Civic, and local libraries. Three community members, Leann Schubert, Gert Lambert and Kathy Statz, have volunteered to receive this training August 19<sup>th</sup> from 1-5 pm at the ROC in Onamia. All action team members may participate in the training as well.

Fr. Greg Poser and Kathy Young attended the Learning Collaborative held in Chaska in June. At this event, many of the ACT communities attending shared ideas and attended breakout sessions.

The Re-Membering Matters Action Team members will be writing monthly articles for the Mille Lacs messenger.

Community letters to the Faith, Civic/Groups, and Government have been sent out to inform about Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lac's goal to bring more awareness and education to area communities with upcoming trainings and community presentations. Invitation to join the Action Team was extended as well.

## Upcoming Events:

Action team meeting: August 18th  
1:30 pm @ the ROC in Onamia

Walk to End Alzheimer's  
Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>  
Northland Arboretum  
14250 Conservaton Drive  
Brainerd, MN 56425  
Registration at 8:30 am  
To join the Re-Membering Matters at Mille Team or to donate to our team go to: <http://www.alz.org>

## Getting Connected:

**10 Ways to Love Your Brain**  
<https://alz.org/abam/#loveYourBrain>

**White House Conference on Aging held during rapidly growing momentum in fight to end Alzheimer's**  
[http://www.alz.org/news\\_and\\_events\\_white\\_house\\_conference.asp](http://www.alz.org/news_and_events_white_house_conference.asp)

**Take the Purple Pledge**  
<http://alz.org/abam/>

**Walk to End Alzheimer's**  
<http://www.alz.org/>

**ACT on Alzheimer's**  
<http://www.actonalz.org/>

**Alzheimer's Association**  
<http://www.alz.org/>

## Facts (Taken from Act on Alzheimer's website http://actonalzheimers.org)

- One in nine people age 65 and older has Alzheimer's disease.
- About one-third of people age 85 and older have Alzheimer's disease.
- The annual number of new cases of Alzheimer's and other dementias is projected to double by 2050.
- Young onset Alzheimer's, occurring in people under age 65, is also on the rise.
- Older African-Americans and Hispanics are proportionately more likely than older whites to have Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

As more and more Minnesotans live with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, the costs and challenges can be overwhelming for them, their families, our communities and our state.

- The cost of caring for those with Alzheimer's and other dementias is estimated to total **\$226 billion** in 2015, increasing to **\$1.1 trillion** (in today's dollars) by 2050.
- Many individuals with Alzheimer's live alone and are at greater risk for inadequate self-care, malnutrition, untreated medical conditions, falls, wandering and accidental deaths.
- Nearly 250,000 Minnesotans care for family members with Alzheimer's disease. These caregivers provide 282 million hours of unpaid care, valued at \$3.4 billion yearly.
- The physical and emotional impact on caregivers results in \$9.7 billion in increased health care costs annually, including \$167 million for Minnesota caregivers.

## 10 Signs of Alzheimer's

1. Memory loss that disrupts life
2. Challenges in planning or solving problems
3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks
4. Confusion with time or place
5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
6. New problems with words in speaking or writing
7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
8. Decreased or poor judgment
9. Withdrawal from work or social activities
10. Changes in mood and personality

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[alz.org/10signs](http://alz.org/10signs)  
800-272-3900

## Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs

The geographic perimeter of this action community encompasses several communities within the Onamia and Isle School Districts, including two districts of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Re-Membering Matters refers to a belief that "re-membering actually means reconnecting or rejoining; that is, restoring being a member and a sense of belonging." The community impact from dementia is bringing people together.

**ACT on Alzheimer's is a volunteer  
driven statewide collaboration  
preparing Minnesota for impacts of  
Alzheimer's disease and related  
dementias.**



### Action Community contact:

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