

THEN & NOW

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2014 WINNER FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Gail Borden Public Library District
Elgin, Illinois

PROGRAM: Tales & Travel Memories

Time Travel: Library Takes Persons with Alzheimer’s Disease and their Caregivers on a Journey

INTRODUCTION: Improving the quality of life for persons living with Alzheimer’s disease or any other dementia is crucial, given that no cures are imminent. Programs that maintain dignity, independence and sense of belonging in the community are more important than ever, as the number of diagnosed persons continues to increase.

Libraries are highly valued, trusted community anchors. In recent years, libraries have grown beyond their traditional mission of providing free access to books to addressing the needs of communities that face barriers to accessing information. Those communities include homeless populations, people for whom English is not a first language, and, now, persons with memory loss and their caregivers. And although Alzheimer’s disease robs people of short-term memory, stories, photos and songs can stimulate long-term memory, ease anxiety, and provide points of connection with caregivers.

The **Gail Borden Public Library Tales & Travel Memories** project is a model approach to providing library services directly to persons with early and mid-stage Alzheimer’s disease. Libraries use materials already in their collections to stimulate memories and conversation through reading and music resources via “excursions” to different regions or countries around the world. The program is designed to be easily replicable nationwide.

The Tales & Travel Memories project is at the forefront of creating a nationwide movement of libraries serving persons with dementia.

MOVING FORWARD: Since receiving the **Rosalinde Gilbert Innovations in Alzheimer’s Disease Caregiving Legacy Award** in 2014, the Gail Borden Public Library has moved rapidly to expand and enhance the program, winning further accolades along the way.

Community memory care centers, residential facilities and an ever-growing number of libraries now implement the Tales & Travel Memories program, adapting the model to meet the interests and abilities of their participants. All materials are free and downloadable at www.talesandtravelmemoies.com.

The library also created Tales & Travel Memories Kits for family members and caregivers to check out at the library. The travel kits are rolling carry-on luggage outfitted with activities that stimulate, engage and entertain persons living with dementia. Meant to reinforce feelings of independence, the activities give the person with dementia some control and choice. Various “excursions” can be checked out for 28 days. A short book on caring for someone with dementia accompanies each kit.

Receiving the Legacy Award has also provided a springboard for a research grant, two

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awards and new partnerships. Tales & Travel Memories was selected as a **2017 Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program Best Practice Honoree**, including a \$5,000 award, with a reception at the Library of Congress. Staff has been invited to present at numerous professional organizations and meetings. The Legacy Award is mentioned in a chapter on the Tales & Travel program written by Mary Beth Riedner, Karen Maki and Miriam Anderson Lytle in the book *The Relevant Library: Essays on Adapting to Changing Needs*, scheduled for publication by McFarland.

The **2015 National Network of Libraries of Medicine \$15,000 Target Award**, funded by the National Institutes of Health, supported evidence-based research of the program's effectiveness, ability to increase outreach and develop caregiver kits.

The study found that the Tales & Travel Memory program: Engaged and improved the cognitive and social interactions of individuals with dementia; positively impacted the relationship between caregivers and individuals with dementia; decreased stigma and stereotypes of adults with dementia; and expanded the library's outreach to an underserved population.

Research indicates that people in early and mid-stages of dementia can still read. The Tales & Travel program focuses on abilities that are retained instead of focusing on those that may have been lost. In addition to stimulating memories, the program also recognizes that many can still find delight in new experiences, even if just for the moment.

WHAT'S NEXT? The goal is to see this movement go nationwide. Libraries are often untapped community assets that can provide a wide variety of materials and programs to improve the quality of life for those living with dementia and their caregivers. In addition to books, libraries include large collections of music and videos that can provide stimulation and entertainment. Ideas for the future are to work with professional organizations serving librarians and persons with dementia to develop training or certification programs on how to fully utilize libraries to serve persons with dementia and their caregivers.

The Gail Borden Public Library District staff is ready to share how Tales & Travel can be implemented at other local libraries.

Our thanks to retired academic librarian Mary Beth Riedner, who created the Tales & Travel Memories Program, and who contributed the information about the program's progress since the Legacy Award. For additional program information, contact: Miriam Anderson Lytle, Division Chief, Community Services & Program Development, Gail Borden Public Library District, (847) 608-5027, mlytle@gailborden.info.

ABOUT THE AWARDS: The Rosalinde Gilbert Innovations in Alzheimer's Disease Caregiving Legacy Awards program recognizes organizations that exemplify creativity, dedication, innovation, and outstanding practices for supporting Alzheimer's disease caregivers.

In partnership with Family Caregiver Alliance, three awards of \$20,000 each are made to programs or projects based in nonprofit organizations, government agencies, or universities in the continental United States (and Hawaii) that respond to the needs of family/informal caregivers of adults with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. For more information, visit www.caregiver.org/gilbert-awards.