

# THEN & NOW

*“The program opens creative storytelling to people with dementia by replacing the pressure to remember with the freedom to imagine.”*



THE ROSALINDE AND ARTHUR  
GILBERT FOUNDATION



## 2012 WINNER FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Center on Age and Community, University of Wisconsin  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**PROGRAM:** TimeSlips

### A New View of Dementia Care: Creative Engagement and the Freedom to Imagine

**INTRODUCTION:** When people talk about Alzheimer’s disease, they frequently focus on loss: loss of memory, loss of relationships, loss of physical and cognitive abilities, loss of “personhood.” But when the creators of TimeSlips developed their innovative story-telling program, they chose a dramatically different approach. The focus of this 2012 Legacy Award-Winner for Creative Expression is on recognizing strengths: imagination becomes more important than memory.

The program began in 1998, a project of the University of Wisconsin’s Center on Age and Community in Milwaukee. It was developed by MacArthur Fellow Anne Basting, PhD, who wanted to improve the quality of life for people with Alzheimer’s disease and their caregivers. To do this, the program incorporates a creative shared story-telling experience that brings joy and meaningful connection to participants. Within the program, people with dementia—even if they have severe memory loss—are free to use their imaginations to respond to prompts as they create stories or even plays. Families, friends and caregivers are welcome to join in.

To share the program’s benefits, staff offers training, certification, and consulting for individuals and other organizations, and acts as a resource for those dedicated to transforming dementia care through creative engagement.

“TimeSlips,” says Anne Basting, “is growing an international network of creative facilitators who invite elders into meaningful engagement, and we support the transformation of care and social support systems to include engagement and expression.”

The project offers a free, interactive website ([www.timeslips.org](http://www.timeslips.org)), where caregivers can facilitate storytelling wherever they are. The site has hundreds of “prompts” (questions and images) to inspire engagement. Program staff have trained more than 3,000 caregivers.

**MOVING FORWARD:** Receiving the **Rosalinde Gilbert Innovations in Alzheimer’s Disease Caregiving Legacy Award** enabled the program to step out of the university and into independent nonprofit status. It now manages a million-dollar budget.

TimeSlips has over 500 certified facilitators in 44 states and 14 countries and more than 50 certified Creative Communities of Care. More than 9,000 stories have been generated.

A theme of collaboration reinforces the organization’s success. TimeSlips staff maintains a collegial relationship with hundreds of other programs, including several previous Caregiving Legacy Award winners. Staff has trained and advised many organizations and facilities in its techniques—always learning from others as well.

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**WHAT'S NEXT?** As one might expect, there's a wide range of creative projects ahead, always aiming to combat the isolation that aging and disability can bring.

TimeSlips staff is currently involved in training 12 rural nursing homes in Kentucky to become Creative Communities of Care. After training, they will partner with regional and national artists, families, volunteers, staff and residents to reinterpret the story of Peter Pan, culminating in three Creative Festivals across the region in the spring of 2019.

TimeSlips recently piloted and will soon offer Tele-Stories--creative engagement by phone to reach those who can't come to a group setting. Also in pilot status are Engagement Parties--grassroots gatherings of friends and family to learn and experience the power of creative engagement in person.

And on a practical note, TimeSlips is in the midst of redesigning their online presence to better bring creative engagement tools to families, student service learners, and staff in aging services and cultural programs.

Anne Basting reflects, "Dementia is certainly a time of challenge and loss, but it can also be a time of tremendous growth and connection. We don't overlook the challenges, but we do encourage people to open themselves to the possibilities of play and joy."

Many thanks to Founder and CEO Anne Basting for providing information about TimeSlips. For further information, contact [info@timeslips.org](mailto:info@timeslips.org), or visit [www.timeslips.org](http://www.timeslips.org).

**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](http://www.caregiver.org/gilbert-awards).



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