



Centered News

June 2024

The Chris & Suzy DeWolf Family Innovation Center for Aging & Dementia's First Anniversary

It's a big deal in our culture when we celebrate a baby's first birthday. Similarly, it's a big deal that we're celebrating the first birthday – first anniversary of the birth of the DeWolf Innovation Center.

There are lots of milestones that lead up to a baby's first birthday, and there have been a lot of milestones that have happened at the DeWolf Innovation Center this year, too! The birth of the Center – also known as the ribbon-cutting – was marked with a standing-room-only crowd (estimated at 450 people). Floor plans allowed those who attended to tour and see the various areas of the Center:

- Mercy Center for Memory Health
- Family Caregivers Center of Mercy
- Community Connections Program
- Age- & Dementia-Friendly Smart Show Room
- Kiosks that contain information, products and technology



During the ceremony, it was noted that the entire DeWolf Innovation Center is a “living classroom,” where plaques in the atrium describe how all of the design elements are age- and dementia-friendly.

Since June 22, 2023, the date of the ribbon-cutting, the following has occurred:

- “My World Wore a Bow Tie” continued to be distributed.
- Lisa Hawk, the Family Caregiver Counselor, moved to Arizona (December 2023).
- Becky Krapfl was hired as Caregiver Engagement Specialist (January 2024).
- Melissa McClure was hired as Community Connections Facilitator (December 2023).
- Kindel Dillon was hired as Operations Director (December 2023).
- Funerals for two Sisters of Mercy who were HallMar Village residents were held at the Innovation Center (September 2023 & March 2024).
- Memory Cafes started in October 2023.

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Events & Groups at the Center

The Family Caregivers Center offers events and groups in two locations and also via Zoom. Check out this month's *Centered Events* calendar for details or call the Center at (319) 221-8866.

Thank you for your support!

The Family Caregivers Center is donor-funded. Gifts help support programs for family caregivers. If you would like to give, please [click here](#) or call Mercy's Foundation at (319) 398-6206. Thanks to all our wonderful donors!



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DeWolf Innovation Center News



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- Dementia Friendly Linn County applied and was invited to join the Dementia Friendly American Network (March 2024).
- Monthly Good Time Socials started at the Center in July 2023.
- The Together in Song Chorus held its first two concerts at the Innovation Center (November 2023 and May 2024).
- The 2nd Annual DeWolf Innovation Center Forum was held at the Center (November 2023).
- The Center hosted a two-day site visit from Julie Minda, a reporter for *Catholic Health World*. The articles she wrote were published May 2024.
- The Joint Presbyterian Homes/Mercy Innovation Committee held its inaugural meeting (March 2024).
- The Community Connections Club at the Innovation Center met for the first time on April 25, 2024, with six participant members and eight volunteer members.
- The Center partnered with the Cedar Rapids Metro Parkinson's Association. Exercise classes are held three times per week in Cambridge Auditorium, in addition to a monthly support group.
- The Center hosted the Pacific Institute, Presbyterian Homes Staff Training, West Music Intellectual Disabilities Chorus Concert, Mercy Associates Regional Meeting, church groups and rotary clubs.
- Staff have given more than 100 tours.
- An InnoTech Task Force was formed to manage the technology of the Kiosks and Smart Show Room.
- Participation by Kathy Good & Tim Charles in the 43 Key Opinion Leader Interviews concluded in December 2023.
- 45 volunteers attended the Innovation Center Volunteer Recognition (April 2024).

We are excited to celebrate our first year and look forward to new opportunities for learning, growth and connection in the future!

– Kathy Good, Senior Director, Innovation Center

I Found my Tribe

I think one of the reasons that I enjoy being asked to tell my story is because so many of us with dementia or Alzheimer's miss their opportunity. They may have skipped some chances to share with others or thought their chance would come again, but it kind of passed them by.

For me, I thought I better tell it before it was gone. It took so long for me to be tested that it was kind of cathartic for me when I got diagnosed. Someone was finally noticing what I noticed all along.



April Neuendorf

Being in the first Living Your Best Life Group, I realize we all have something – not the same diagnosis, but a commonality that is with all of us. This makes us part of a family. This is my tribe.

I used to hate speaking in front of an audience. Yet, when I was asked if Kevin and I would consider doing a very short video of our (my) story, I didn't hesitate. I was told it would be very impactful. That did it for me. If someone else could get something out of it, it was worth it to me to do.

I have listened to other folks' stories, and it is very impactful to hear how/what they have gone through to get where they are now. There is such a stigma out there. You receive a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or dementia, and people hear and steer clear! They don't realize there is always a starting point. You're not diagnosed and sitting in a wheelchair with nothing to say, drooling. The disease has a start, middle and end. We own all of that and go through it.

I will continue to advocate for myself and others for as long as I can. It is a big hope of mine that I can continue to learn more to share with others. I love that people tell me, "I don't think of you as having dementia. Are you sure that you do?" Yes, I do, but I don't always act like I do. That is the best part – to hear that from others. To that, I tell folks: I have dementia, but it doesn't have me.

– April Neuendorf, Center Volunteer

Changing Seasons & Longer Days

A quick Google search of specific recognition days in June brings up varied celebrations. Father's Day, Flag Day, Juneteenth, World Environment Day (not to be confused with Earth Day,) National Camping Month and PRIDE month are recognized, to name a few.

Although National Family Caregivers Month is recognized every November, we think every month is reason to celebrate dedicated caregivers and the work of caregiving. The summer months always feel more hopeful to me as temperatures increase and the days get longer. The thought of being outside, school being out, vacations, trips to get ice cream, and warm weather activity brings a sense of contentment and comfort not always found in the colder seasons. Just the feel of the warmth of the sun on your face or the smell of fresh air can be a reset. For many caregivers, though, longer days are just that – longer days. The summer solstice falls on June 20 this year and indicates the day of the year with the most light. This is identified as the start of the astronomical summer. The National Alzheimer's Association recognizes The Longest Day as an opportunity



for fundraising efforts, and The Longest Day participants are encouraged to raise funds and awareness about Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Take a moment to pause and truly reflect on what you are doing as a caregiver, day in and day out – on the long days, on the overwhelming days, on the great days and on the hard days – sometimes with assistance and sometimes alone. We know caregiving can be isolating and overwhelming. Give yourself grace. Put the “to do” list away and enjoy the warm weather. If you find yourself in need of a listening companion, a confidante who will not judge or correct, or a resource just a phone call or email away, please contact the Family Caregivers Center. Our goal is to support caregivers with education, training, resources and trusted companions. We recognize that there is strength in numbers, no matter the season or season of life that you are in.

– Becky Krapfl, Caregiver Engagement Facilitator

Helping Your Loved One Adjust to Assisted Living

Change is a constant; yet, accepting and adapting to change isn't easy. Change – including moving from the comfort of one's home into an unfamiliar assisted living – can be difficult. Below are some tips you can follow to assist someone to ease the transition of moving into an assisted living facility.

1. Stay in touch

Regular visits, especially after the move-in period, can help your loved one settle in and assure them of your love and support. If you are not in town or less available, use technology (FaceTime, Skype, WhatsApp, etc.) to your advantage.

2. Lend an empathetic ear

Moving to an assisted living facility is often accompanied by mixed feelings. Listen to their concerns and, as needed, provide helpful solutions. Encourage participation in activities and social events to get used to their new environment.

3. Don't be overprotective

Though you may be concerned about their ability to adjust, avoid being overprotective. Offer necessary and reasonable attention and care, but refrain from hand-holding.

4. Add a personal touch to the new living space

One way to help your loved one adjust to their new environment is by placing familiar items and keepsakes in their assisted living suite or apartment. Involve your loved one in decision making and setting up the space.

5. Connect with the staff

The staff at assisted living facilities take a lot of care to make sure their residents' needs are met. Get to know the staff and discuss your loved one's care needs. This will ensure that the little things that make their life comfortable are taken care of.

Without a doubt, the initial days at the assisted living community can be challenging. Use the tips shared to help in the adjustment to their new home.

– Dot Hinman, Content Writer
(Adapted from Daily Caring)



“Volunteer Spotlights” highlight our wonderful volunteers who give of their time and talents. If you’re interested in becoming a volunteer or want to learn more, please call the Center at (319) 221-8866 or email fcgc@mercycare.org.

I grew up in Perry, Iowa. I graduated from Iowa State University in 1976 with a major in Computer Science. I worked several jobs before coming to Cedar Rapids to work for Collins in 1979. I retired from Collins in 2019.



Georgana Ridnour

I have two daughters, both of whom I adopted from China. My oldest is teaching at an international school in Mexico. My youngest is attending Mount Mercy. When I adopted my second daughter, my mother moved in with us. She was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. I was a caregiver for two young girls and my mother for 10 years. My hobby seems to be volunteering.

I am a new volunteer with the DeWolf Innovation Center. To start, I will be helping with the new Connections Club on Thursdays. I am already part of the Connections at St. Paul’s United Methodist Church and heard there was another group starting at the Innovation Center. I have been providing respite and sitting with people living with chronic conditions so their caregivers can attend support groups and events. I am open to other roles in the future. I am looking forward to meeting new people at Connections Club and having a good time.

My advice to caregivers and volunteers is to be flexible, even when others aren’t. Go with the flow.

One-on-One Meetings

Individual meetings with a staff member are available for caregivers interested in discussing their situation. During a one-on-one, we help caregivers by providing reassurance, guidance, education, and connections to community and Center resources. To request a one-on-one meeting, please call the Center at (319) 221-8866 or email fcgc@mercycare.org.

Celebrating Volunteers at Appreciation Event



On April 4, 2024, the Family Caregivers Center and DeWolf Innovation Center

held a volunteer appreciation event at Theatre Cedar Rapids to honor and celebrate our wonderful volunteers. The event started with a tour of Theatre Cedar Rapids, giving a behind-the-scenes look at show production and reviewing the history of the building. The tour



ended in the Linge Lounge, where volunteers were recognized for their contribution to the Center through the variety of roles they

serve and the amount of time and energy they give.

Kathy Good, Innovation Center Senior Director and Family Caregivers Center Director, shared the value of participating in art to reduce social isolation and provide meaning and purpose.



Volunteers were given an appreciation gift (designed by local artist and volunteer Linda Peterson) to engage in art by decorating their own journal to use as they please. Volunteers ended the event by enjoying refreshments and each other’s company.

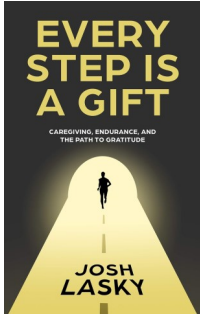


Thank you, volunteers, for all that you do. We are so grateful and hope you enjoyed the appreciation event. Thank you to all who assisted in making this event possible!



– Abby Weirather, Center Manager

Book Review



“Every Step is a Gift: Caregiving, Endurance and the Path to Gratitude”

By Josh Lasky

According to AARP, 78 percent of people find themselves in the position of caregiver to a loved one at some point in their life.

But, not many will embrace ultramarathons as a coping technique. “Every Step Is a Gift: Caregiving, Endurance and the Path to Gratitude” explores Josh Lasky’s 11-year journey as a caregiver to his father, who battled Parkinson’s Disease. Josh was just 21 when he took on this Herculean responsibility and, although his story is unique, it is also universal. In his uplifting and life-affirming journey, Josh’s service to his father turns into a personal source of strength for him after deciding to ride his bike, alone, from Washington, D.C. to Portland. Along the way, he discovers his love for endurance sports, while also uncovering the realization that, although caregiving can be challenging, it can also be empowering. Whether you’re a caregiver, an athlete, or just dealing with the hardships of the human condition, this book can help you find meaning in the struggle – and become stronger and more grateful in the process.

Spring Event Review

This Spring has been filled with fun and engaging events. Below are a just a few that we would like to highlight. To find out about events occurring at the Center, check out this month’s Centered Events Calendar. We hope you can join us in the future!

Good Time Social

In April, attendees of the Good Time Social enjoyed a warm and windy day out flying kites. Some had never flown a kite before and the smiles were contagious!



Container Gardening & Lettuce Bowls

In April, the Linn County Master Gardeners shared how to create a container garden. Participants planted their own container to take home with a variety of flowers and lettuces while enjoying a beautiful spring day!



“Take a Moment” Podcast

“Take a Moment” Caregiving Podcast is a podcast with reflections, tips and inspiration for family caregivers. Each episode is three to five minutes

long and produced by our very own volunteer Dr. Peg O’Rourke, retired counselor and caregiver to her husband, David.

“Take a Moment” Podcast: [Click here](https://www.buzzsprout.com/1855120/) or go to <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1855120/> to listen. Enjoy!

About the Center

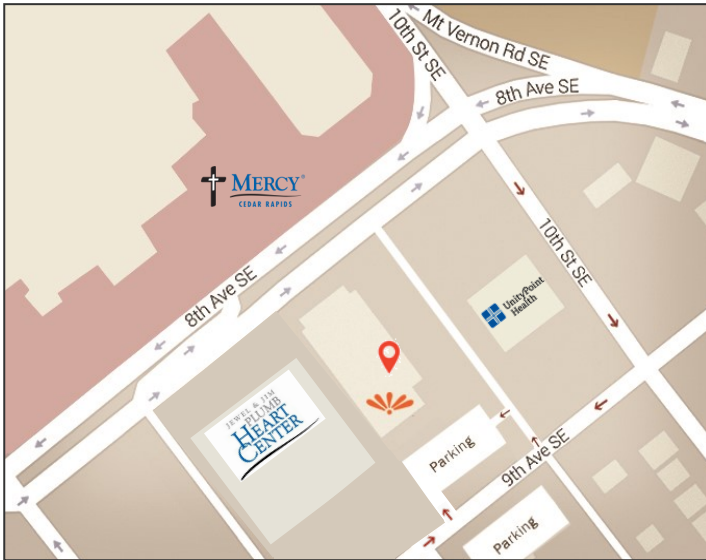
The Family Caregivers Center of Mercy is a resource for family caregivers who are caring for adults living with chronic conditions, such as dementia; Parkinson's; cancer; diabetes; heart and lung diseases; arthritis; COPD; etc.

Caregivers may often feel alone, overwhelmed and not sure where to find help. Sometimes, it is difficult to even know what help is needed. Through individual meetings, trained volunteers and staff members listen to caregivers to help them identify needs and strengths; answer questions; and connect to community resources. Support groups, multi-week discussion groups, and educational sessions help caregivers connect to others in similar circumstances with access to trusted resources in two welcoming and supportive environments.

Family Caregivers Center at the...

Downtown - 901 Building

901 8th Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401



Directions: Take Eighth Avenue and turn onto Seventh Street. Travel one block south, then turn left onto Ninth Avenue. Travel 1.5 blocks east and turn into the parking lot.

Parking: Parking is available in the in the back of the building, where the Family Caregivers Center's entrance can be found.

The Center Provides

- One-on-one meetings to discuss your caregiving situation
- Men's, Women's and Wednesday Afternoon Coffee Groups
- Multi-week supportive learning and discussion groups
- Multi-week series for caregivers whose loved one has died
- Educational events
- Question & Answer sessions (i.e. Veteran's benefits and Medicaid)
- Together in Song Chorus
- Master Gardener events
- Up-to-date resource lists and connection to trusted community resources
- Book-lending library

Family Caregivers Center at the...

DeWolf Innovation Center

9000 C Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52402



Directions: Take C Avenue NE. Heading north, go past St. Mark's Lutheran Church to Hallmar Village senior living community and the Innovation Center entrance. Turn right into the drive and proceed to the main parking lot directly in front of The Chris & Suzy DeWolf Family Innovation Center for Aging & Dementia.

Enter the building and check in at the Family Caregivers Center information desk on your left.

Contact Us

(319) 221-8866 | fgc@mercyare.org | familycaregiverscenter.org