



Centered News

July 2024

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!

DeWolf Innovation Center Featured in *Catholic Health World*

We are excited to share that The Chris & Suzy DeWolf Family Innovation Center for Aging & Dementia was featured in *Catholic Health World* in April 2024. This feature included interviews by reporter Julie Minda from her visit to the Center in the fall of 2023. Julie spent several days at the DeWolf Innovation Center talking to a variety of groups, including staff, volunteers, caregivers, and persons living with chronic conditions, such as dementia while gathering stories, information and photos to add to the feature. The published feature highlights a variety of aspects of the DeWolf Innovation Center, such as:



- The conception and idea formation of the DeWolf Innovation Center
- The joint venture of HallMar Village between Mercy and Presbyterian Homes & Services
- The history of the Family Caregivers Center and current offerings
- Kathy Good's inspiration as founder and director, as well as her book, *My World Wore a Bow Tie*
- Mercy's Center for Memory Health
- Importance of customer discovery and research-based practices
- Living Classroom
- Connections Club
- Smart showroom & assistive technology kiosks



This feature is the beginning of a series of articles that will be published highlighting the work of the DeWolf Innovation Center and stories from those who have utilized services. If you're interested in reading the feature, you can find it on the *Catholic Health World* website [here](#) or you can request a copy next time you visit the DeWolf Innovation Center.

– Abby Weirather, Family Caregivers Center Manager



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DeWolf Innovation Center News



Living Classroom Pilot

A living classroom is an educational model that incorporates hands-on learning and experiences with connections to the community outside of the student's classroom. One of the components of the DeWolf Innovation Center is a living classroom concept, in which students from local colleges can connect and learn from residents in local senior living communities, specifically HallMar Village.

This spring, a group of Mount Mercy University students from the Aging in America class were paired with a small group of residents from HallMar Village. The students interviewed the residents about their experience living in a senior living community. They asked a variety of questions, including what inspired them to move into the community and how their experience has been since moving. The students then compiled their interviews into a report.

The Mt. Mercy students, along with their professor, Joni Howland, shared their findings on May 6 to an audience from the DeWolf Innovation Center and HallMar Village, including the residents interviewed. The students and the residents at HallMar Village found the experience to be positive and enjoyed their interactions with each other.

The DeWolf Innovation Center, in partnership with HallMar Village, plans to continue offering experiences for students to connect with residents and learn from their interactions. We look forward to sharing with you as we continue to build the living classroom component at the DeWolf Innovation Center.

– Abby Weirather, Family Caregivers Center Manager

Looking for Bakers!

We are looking for individuals who love to bake and are interested in regularly baking cookies or treats to serve at our groups and events. If you enjoy baking and are interested in learning more, we would love to talk to you. Please contact Kathy Krapfl at (319) 221-8866 or email fcgc@mercyare.org.

Celebrating One Year of Living Your Best Life

On May 4, 2023, the Family Caregivers Center gave a gift to people living with dementia that will last forever.

“Living Your Best Life” was started as a pilot program involving six participants – three women and three men with various forms of and earlier stages of dementia. They came together for the first time to discuss “how to live your best life.” They discussed their challenges, fears and life living with dementia. This program started because, as many of the spouses of caregivers said, “What is there for me?” The Family Caregiver Center listened and “Living Your Best Life” began.



Then, in January of 2024, another group of three men and three women living with dementia joined this pilot group. No one knew how this would go. Would they gel like the original six did? They needn't have worried: The whole group meets every Friday for an hour and a half and have become quite close – best friends. The spouses have, too. Most of them meet while their person is meeting and, like their spouses, have bonded and become a “family.” The now 12 members of the group get along beautifully and, on May 4 of 2024, the group celebrated being together for one year (six months for the second group). The entire group met at member Judith Wagner's lovely home. Everyone brought something delicious to share. They reminisced about their time together, told stories, and talked about their experiences together and how much they appreciated and loved each other.



Dementia is a difficult diagnosis. It is hard on the person living with dementia and their caregiver. These groups have provided strength, encouragement and support, and we are all eternally grateful to have each other.

– Mary Crandall, Caregiver

Know Love & Give It to the Point of Being Reckless

When I say “know your love,” it’s like saying to be comfortable with love. I’d say knowing your love is the same as “trusting” love. Trusting love frees us to speak to people even if we don’t know them. We needn’t fear that speaking to a stranger is somehow dangerous. Speaking does not mean to overwhelm them, just be nice. Be respectful. Knowing our love also means paying attention to the person we are expressing love toward. Paying attention helps enable saying what fits.



I like saying “I love you” to someone who just said something or did something that touched my heart in a very meaningful way – as if to say, “I needed that,” in some sort of way.

That is reckless love as I mean it. It doesn’t matter that the phrase, I love you, is normally used in a narrow, more defined way. You mean it because it is felt deeply. Reckless is the term I like because you are showing vulnerability with ease.

I have a friend (Karen), whom I’ve never met who lives a thousand miles from me. She is a caregiver for her husband; caregiving is a journey I also held with my wife for years. In some of Karen’s emails, the message she gave touched me deeply. As a result, I begin my return email with, “My dearest Karen,” I’ve also had times when my salutation was, “I love you.” Yet, neither of those statements were suggestive nor out of place. They fit the level of feeling at those times when we connected.

I left my counselor’s office recently uttering these words, “I love you dearly.” It fit the level of relating we had shared that helped me along. Yes, I expect such statements are abnormal, but if they fit the feeling level, then they are awesome.

I recently spent three hours with my wood chipper at my neighbor’s place. He and I chipped up two big piles of branches. It’s too dry to burn, so this was a good alternative. It felt good to do it – a feeling like brothers – love without the words.

I spoke to my restaurant waitress the other day about how wonderful her demeanor was – her meaningful

smile. It felt good being in her presence. It was only after my comment that she shared that that same day was her birthday. Isn’t that wonderful? Reckless love.

Reckless love helps counter the need for “being human,” a time when frustration and disharmony overcomes us. Reckless love keeps us in the heart. The heart is where caring gives us a feel-good response and where life has meaning.

But, what if we show love to someone who doesn’t deserve it? Bad behavior on someone’s part is merely a reminder that such could be me. Instead of passing judgment, the love within me empathizes. If it wasn’t for love and caring, then I could be the same – not able to hold bad traits in check. In this case, my response might be silence or maybe a smile or whatever my trusting love comes up with.

In the 1970s, I was at a lecture by Leo Buscaglia, a professor at University of Southern California who wrote and taught a course on love. After the lecture, I, among many others, went up front to meet him. He greeted each person, male and female, with an ever-so-long hug. Way longer than our 1970s social setting “sanctioned.” He was promoting loving students, loving work mates and so on. He didn’t call it reckless love, but it means the same to me.

Who doesn’t deserve love? That is a question that each of us finds answers to as we continue our journey towards loving and caring for everyone. We don’t start out loving everyone. We start where we are and keep expanding. And, as we go along, we become a bit more reckless with our love. Be kind in ways not normal. How wonderful it could be if reckless love became the norm.

– *Les Deal, Center Volunteer & Former Caregiver*

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 fccg@mercyare.org.

Event Highlight: Together in Song Chorus Concert

The Together in Song Chorus held its Spring 2024 concert on May 3. This was the second concert at the DeWolf Innovation Center. Similar to the Fall 2023 concert, there was a large audience of nearly 300 people!

The concert, titled “Standing Room Only,” included songs from Broadway, Big Band, Vaudeville and the Silver Screen.

This season’s chorus was comprised of close to fifty individuals living with a variety of chronic conditions, their care partners and volunteer singers. Steve Nurre has directed the chorus for more than six years, along with his wife, Mary, who also accompanies the group.



Dr. Tim Quinn, Mercy President & CEO, opened the concert with words of welcome. Kathy Krapfl, Center Office Coordinator, and Jamie Henley, Director of Volunteer Services, provided narration, dancing and entertainment through the concert. Various chorus members’ talents were highlighted with solos and small group performances. Kathy Good, Senior Director, expressed appreciation for the contribution of Louise McMaster, Shiela Kielly, and Sheila Geraghty, who have retired this season from their volunteer positions supporting the chorus.



The concert closed with a reception in the Small Hall. Many stayed to enjoy each other’s company and a variety of treats made by chorus members and beautifully arranged by Laura Sagers.



We are sad to see a fun season come to a close, but look forward to the next season starting this fall. Look for additional information with dates on a flyer in this month’s Centered News. We hope you can join us!

Best Versus Right

Prior to every Women’s Coffee meeting, volunteer facilitators Carole Butz and Laura Sagers send out an email with a group discussion topic. Often, the topics are adapted from concepts explored in the book “The Mindful Caregiver” by Nancy Kriseman. Below is an email with a discussion topic from May.

"Always do your best, no more and no less." As we meet this week, consider the words best versus right. You can cause yourself tremendous stress by believing you have to make the RIGHT decision or there will be a bad result. Trying to always make the RIGHT decision can be paralyzing and even lead to no decision at all. Embracing BEST can actually transform your caregiving and make the difference between walking alongside stress, instead of stress walking all over you. Best is more forgiving, and allows room for opportunity and compromise. Best allows you to examine options and choose what is best at the time and allows you to change your mind.

Embracing best:

- frees you from getting stuck in right
- provides the opportunity to examine options
- helps pave a path for decisions to be made more easily
- helps set limits

(Adapted from “The Mindful Caregiver” by Nancy Kriseman)

It can be easy as a caregiver to feel a sense of guilt or failure, especially if your focus is on being right. You may look back at your situation or past actions and feel bad for what you did or did not do. As wonderful as it would be if we were always right, that is not reality. Also, many times the situations we find ourselves in are extremely difficult and often unexpected. We do the very best we can to be there for those we love with the information, skills and ability that we have at that time. We are human, not perfect; we make mistakes. It’s ok to apologize if things did not go as expected or desired. The important part is learning what did or didn’t work and applying it as you move forward to be the best you possibly can be.

– Abby Weirather, Family Caregivers Center Manager

Book Review

“Aging In Place” Workbook

Aging In Place: Your Home, Your Community, Your Choice is an excellent workbook designed by The Aging In Place Leadership Team of New River Valley, Va., for those who are planning to age in place. Beginning with “hope for the best, but



plan for the worst,” the authors offer helpful checklists to assist you in identify needs and wants, as well as possible resources.

The questions are thorough and invite you to really think through what might be required in each case.

They cover housing; health and wellness; transporta-

tion; personal finance; connection; and growth. In each section, realistic questions help you explore your current situation and make a plan. This evaluation is so thorough that it should be required for anyone who is unsure about aging in place.

The questions asked are hard, but realistic. They ask, if you are unable to handle an area, is there anyone who can help you manage? If you are thinking about aging in place, take a few minutes to read through the questions to help you make a realistic assessment. This workbook is highly recommended. You can find it online by [clicking here](#) or ask the Center for a printed copy.

– Dot Hinman, Content Writer



“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](#) or go to <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1855120/> to listen. Enjoy!



“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@mercy.org.

Remembering Mike Brogan



We have been fortunate in the last eight years to have said goodbye to very few volunteers. When we have said goodbye, it is because they have moved or found passions or commitments elsewhere. We have not had the experience of navigating a goodbye as a volunteer has passed away.

So, it is with great sadness that we share the passing of Mike Brogan in May 2024. Mike was a Mercy volunteer and the chair of the InnoTech Task Force at the DeWolf Innovation Center. Mike was a kind and well-connected person who could get things done. For the short time he served on the InnoTech Task Force, he had a significant influence. He will be greatly missed by those who knew and worked with him at the DeWolf Innovation Center. Thank you, Mike!

Resource Review HygienJoy Mitts/Wipes

In May, Susie Winkowski and Mary Humphrey shared about their caregiving experiences during a session of the Dementia Basics Series. Susie specifically mentioned a resource she has found helpful in caring for her husband, Walt.



Susie shared the reality that encouraging someone living with dementia to bathe can be challenging. Susie and Walt stay very busy and like to spend time outdoors. There are moments when finding time to take a shower before heading out the door can be very difficult. Susie found a resource called HygienJoy that she has found extremely helpful on days when showers are not possible.

HygienJoy is a rinse-free, pre-soaped, all-over bath wash packed in a mitt or wipe. You lightly wet the mitt or wipe to create a lather; scrub the entire body; and then pat dry with a towel. HygienJoy can be found on Amazon for purchase.

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.

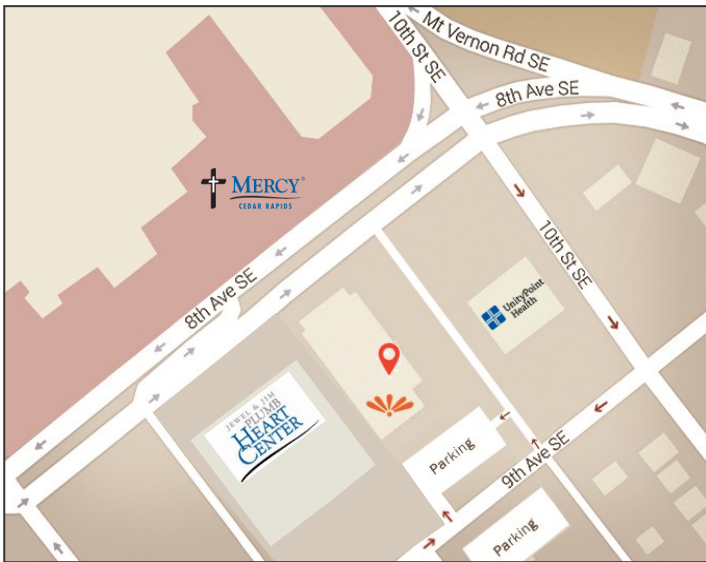
The Center Provides

- 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...

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 is located.

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