

Thanks for being a caring community

Years ago my Dad started having problems remembering things. He was only 70 years old at the time. He is 93 now.

A lot has changed over the last 23 years. I moved my Dad in with me and had to give up my job to care for my Dad. This way I could make sure he was getting the care he needed. We moved to Lake St. Peter after visiting one of my Dad's friends and Dad decided he wanted to stay in the area.

When my Dad's friend passed away, I realized that I needed to find something to keep active. This is when I met Sarah Krieger from the Alzheimer Society. She was a great help to me with her knowledge on dementia and she got me through rough times dealing with the changes in my Dad. She listened and gave me great help in dealing with my anger, fear and frustration.

During this time, she told me about the VON Adult Day Program. The staff are trained in working with people with dementia. I started bringing my Dad to the Bancroft Adult Day Program. After bringing him in a few times, Dad eventually told me that he enjoyed it. It is an amazing program. They have great staff and volunteers who help out. Those that attend are kept busy playing games, eating a great lunch and enjoying the volunteers who come in to play music, line dance and sing. Socializing with others is a big part of the program.

At first I thought that taking Dad to the ADP would be inconvenient for me because of the drive back and forth from Lake St. Peter (and it was also getting expensive) but eventually I decided to stay in town. Staying in Bancroft gave me a chance to wander through stores, grocery shop, and go to different places for lunch. I even had time to read a book. I realized I needed to do this for my Dad so he could have a great outing away from home and the bonus was that it gave me a much needed break. Every caregiver needs some down time and a break as we can get very tired and worn out. It is worth every minute for both of us. Now I say 'we are going to see your friends?' and he gets a smile on his face (even though he can't remember their names).

The Alzheimer Society has a free program called 'Music for Me.' Volunteers download the client's favourite music on an iPod shuffle and they also provide headphones. I just had it done for my Dad and he listens to his music during the day. He loves listening to it rather than staring at the TV. He used to sleep all the time watching TV now he is awake more during the day.

It is a struggle every day as you see changes in your loved one. It caused anger, fear and sadness knowing you can't do anything other than love them and try to keep them involved. My Dad has been with me for 10 years and I hope I can continue to keep him home with me.

I recommend to every caregiver to look into Music for Me and the Adult Day Program because the benefits for both you and your loved one is amazing. It's not just their disease. It's ours too.

For more information, contact your local Alzheimer Society at 613-332-4614.

Submitted by Brenda Grant

January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month. The Alzheimer Society of Hastings-Prince Edward hosts its annual walk for Alzheimer's Jan. 28 at NHHS.