



WAKE FOREST

A "DEMENTIA FRIENDLY" COMMUNITY

It is normal for our memory to deteriorate a little as we grow older. When you or your loved ones start having problems remembering things, it can be very upsetting, frightening, and even dangerous. When the loss of mental functions starts to interfere with a person's daily activities, he or she could possibly be in the early stages of dementia.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia and is usually associated with aging. Mini strokes, brain tumors, vascular dementia, Parkinson's disease, and Huntington's disease are additional possibilities given these common symptoms, but they have different causes. It is very important to consult a doctor if you notice more than a few of these daily disruptive signs: memory loss, confusion, disorientation, speech problems, increased irritability, social withdrawal, restlessness, mood swings, depression, unsteady movements, sleep disorders, or misplacing things, along with other personality and behavioral changes.

Fortunately, you are not alone. There are support groups that can assist and help you understand these problems. Research shows that with supportive care, people living with dementia – and their caregivers – experience less physical and emotional stress, better health, fewer hospitalizations, and less time in long-term-care facilities.

Thus, early in 2015, a group of local Wake Forest business leaders formed "Senior Information and Networking Group of Wake Forest," (SING-WF for short), focusing on more than simple networking for the 55+ age population and their caregivers. The mission of SING-WF is to provide a comprehensive resource for non-profit and for-profit senior-focused organizations to share dementia education information, updates, outreach, coordination of services, and public awareness and advocacy, focused on the senior population.

SING-WF has grown into a large joint venture of private businesses, non-profit organizations, and the Town of Wake Forest. If your locally-based company or organization would like to join SING-WF, annual dues are \$75 for corporations, \$50 for sole proprietors, and \$15 for non-profits. You can apply online, sign up for classes, and get more information at www.SING-WF.com, or by emailing info@SING-WF.com or calling 919-556-3706.

Members can attend this support group's quarterly meetings, usually on the last Friday in January, April, July, and October, at 100 South Franklin Street in the Wake Electric Community Room. Registration begins at 8:15 AM, followed by meetings at

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8:30 AM, with light refreshments provided by a local sponsoring business. At previous SING-WF meetings, industry experts have presented useful information, methods, and tools on topics such as protection from financial and technological fraud, scams, and other threats; new devices to help hearing and visually impaired, medication reminders, and home safety; senior activities associated with the Town of Wake Forest, Chamber of Commerce, local churches, senior centers, and outreach programs; police officers training and procedures used to assist seniors in sudden mental and physical distress situations; and services and support available to veterans as they age through the Veterans Administration system; plus many more great topics that are still forthcoming.

Some other benefits of joining SING-WF include website exposure with important links; networking with service organizations, business leaders, and town officials; exclusive discounts from the Wake Forest Chamber of Commerce Senior Expo, and The Renaissance Centre's educational workshops and events; plus free admittance to the "Dementia Friendly @ Work Training," which is also offered to any non-member business, organization, and individual for \$100. This two-hour class provides more facts, tips, resources, and guidance in recognizing the signs and care associated with Alzheimer's and dementia. Upon completion, attendees are given a window decal to proudly display, announcing their business as being "Dementia Friendly."

Nearly 60 percent of people with dementia live in their own communities, and one in seven lives alone. Communities across the country are experiencing an urgent call to serve and support those with dementia, and their families and caregivers, by becoming dementia friendly. Thank you to the hard work, extensive efforts, and commitments of SING-WF, the Town of Wake Forest, and the Alzheimer's Association Eastern NC Chapter for making Wake Forest one of the few "Dementia Friendly" communities in America that has answered this call.

By helping everyone in a community understand what dementia is and how it affects people, each of us can make a difference for those touched by it. ■

It is our honor and pleasure at Bright Funeral Home to be a participating member of SING-WF, with several of our staff having completed the "Dementia Friendly @ Work Training" class.

For more information about SING-WF, a list of certified dementia-friendly businesses in town, upcoming events, and for a membership application, visit www.sing-wf.com.

Jill Bright is with Bright Funeral Home, located at 405 S. Main Street in Wake Forest. Bright Funeral Home serves the Wake Forest, Rolesville, Youngsville, Franklinton, Falls, Bay Leaf, Loiusburg, Raleigh, and surrounding areas. For more information, call 919-556-5811 or visit www.brightfunerals.com.

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