



— Lou-Ann

Lou-Ann has been volunteering with the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region for several months. Lou-Ann had a family member who lived with dementia whom she was a caregiver for, allowing her to recognize the hardships faced by both the person living with dementia, and their families. Lou-Ann noted that reaching out to the Alzheimer Society relieves some of that stress encountered through the resources and activities it offers to communities, and desired to be a part of making a difference.

Lou-Ann is a Recollections volunteer, working one-to-one with clients in the early to middle stages of Alzheimer's. Lou-Ann works closely with clients, capturing their memories to create their life story book that they can share and enjoy for years to come. Lou-Ann also volunteered for the Winter Social Event. Lou-Ann notes the kindness and care that organizers executed when preparing and facilitating the event. She appreciates being a part of an organization who is dedicated to ensuring all visitors feel valued and appreciated. Lou-Ann is one of the volunteers who makes it all possible, being a vital member of the team who makes programs and events such as these possible and meaningful for all those involved.

Lou-Ann came to the Alzheimer Society as a volunteer with experience of what it is like having a loved one living with dementia. Lou-Ann participated in the volunteer training offered by the Alzheimer Society that prepared her for her volunteer endeavors. Through this training, she gained a better understanding of dementia and also new skills. In her time, she has been learning something new and valuable from each client- new strategies and an appreciation and recognition that dementia presents itself differently in everyone. She has also gained knowledge through discussions with staff members as they share their knowledge and offer their guidance as unexpected or complex issues may arise.

As she has put beautifully, Lou-Ann views her volunteer work as a reciprocal gift. Giving the gift of joy to her recollections client by spending one-on-one time with them, learning of their life story. She also receives that gift of joy in the laughter, smiles and light in the clients' eyes as they recount their childhood memories.

Lou-Ann's volunteering contributions have an impact for people living with dementia and their families. People living with dementia enjoy a meaningful connection and activity as they engage in the creation of their storybook, while their care partner takes some time to themselves.

This helps alleviate the personal and social consequences of Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias. In the last few months Lou-Ann has been volunteering, she has noticed that her contributions have a significant impact on clients and their families, emphasizing the emotional reward that she feels each time she interacts with clients. In retirement, Lou-Ann feels that her volunteer work allows her to continue to make positive contributions to the Alzheimer Society, but also to the community at large. She is content in knowing that she is making a difference.