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You either decide to go forwards or backwards

Mary Colbey was once an Olympic athlete taking home medals for running and high jump. When Mary was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Mary felt "struck down", resentful and constantly questioned "Why me?" Mary felt that she had been a giving person all her life and didn't deserve this – Mary became depressed and even had suicidal thoughts.

Once on anti-depressants, Mary's attitude towards the illness improved slightly – but it was her strong family support and perhaps a bit of the determination that made Mary a distinguished athlete, that empowered Mary to turn things around. Though still resentful, Mary began to adjust her lifestyle with the help of her daughter, Jan, whom Mary credits for much of her strength. Among other things, Jan helped Mary label cupboards so things would be easy to find and organized Mary's closet by outfits. This way, Mary could pick out her outfit the night before and not stress about it in the morning. It was difficult for Mary to give up her physical activities as she aged – but after her tailbone injury, Mary began exercising her brain more than her body with crosswords and jigsaw puzzles.

Mary was unsure about joining the programs at the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region at first because of the resentment. Now, Mary is an avid member of the R.E.B.E.L. group and Coffee Club. Mary sees the support groups as "opportunities to express [herself] again", as well as a place to meet new people and socialize with friends, "I like feeling welcomed and known".

Since making some life changes, Mary is still enjoying her life and "feels like [she's] beaten it". Mary's advice to others starting on this journey: "Try everything. Go forward, not backwards. Going backwards is like giving up. It is up to you where you go."



Dr. Phill

Well-known in the Niagara Region, Dr. Phillip O'Reilly currently sits on the board of the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region. He is also offering his medical expertise to answer any questions you may have about Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias. If you have a question for our very own Dr. Phill, please see the last page for how you can contact us.



Tips & Strategies for Daily Living

Here are some tips we have gathered from people with memory loss. You can adapt these tips to suit your own needs and eventually figure out what works best for you.

- **USE VISUAL AIDS** – Use calendars with large blocks or post-it notes to remind you of tasks you need to complete.

A daily journal (see example on the back page) can help keep appointments but can also allow you to reflect on your day and fill in family members on what's been going on in your life.

- **TAKE YOUR TIME** – Allow yourself plenty of time to complete tasks. Be patient with yourself.
- **KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOUR** – Laughter can reduce stress and frustration.
- **STAY ORGANIZED** – Try to keep things in the same place; if you keep your calendar or journal by the phone, you may forget your appointments but you will train yourself to know where to find that information.
- **DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP**
- **JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP** – Especially in the early stages, it is beneficial to talk about your feelings about the illness and realize that you are not alone.
- **BE POSITIVE** – Focus on the things you **CAN** do!

Community resources

The Niagara Region has plenty of resources available to aid persons with dementia and their families.

If you find yourself having difficulty with things such as meal preparation, personal hygiene, housekeeping chores, and/or transportation, there are agencies that can help.

If you require in-home medical assistance, want more information about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias or want to connect with other persons with the condition, there are several options for you.

Please contact the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region at 905-687-3914 and ask to speak with a Family Support worker for more details.

Current Research

Cholinesterase inhibitors are one type of treatment available for Alzheimer's disease. These drugs prevent the breakdown of acetylcholine, a chemical important in both learning and memory. One method of taking this treatment is the **Exelon™ Patch**.

Compared to the pill form, this method maintains the rate of delivery and levels of Exelon (rivastigmine) within the body reducing side effects and can limit treatment-associated gastrointestinal problems. Individuals with dementia have been shown to be more reliable in taking this form of treatment and caregivers can physically see that treatment is being taken.

***Note:** Treatment does not cure the disease, it acts to slow progression. Individual results will vary – this may not be the best treatment for everyone. Several other treatments exist for treating Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and will be explored in later issues.

Source: www.alzheimer.ca

Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region's news & events

Please contact Christine Maloney for further details on either event: 905-687-6865 extension 556

or
cmaloney@alzheimerniagara.ca

- **June 3, 2009**

The Peter Saracino Alzheimer Golf Classic



On June 3, 144 golfers participated in the annual golf tournament. This year, \$37,000 was raised. Thank you to everyone who supported us and we hope to see you next year!

- **September 17, 2009**

National Alzheimer Coffee Break Day



Coffee Breaks are hosted by supporters of the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region who want to help raise money for programs and services that help persons affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

From the editor...

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the first issue of Connections, our newsletter for persons with early-stage dementia.

It is our hope that this newsletter will provide opportunities for you to feel connected with other individuals living with early-stage dementia and to share information, insights, ideas and strategies.

We believe that in listening to your voices we will increase our awareness of your needs, strengths and capabilities. We hope to hear from you with your thoughts, ideas and opinions about the newsletter.

I want to personally thank Priscilla Tran, fourth year student in the Health Sciences Program at Brock University. She has worked very hard to create this first edition of the newsletter. Thank you to our friends in the early-stage program who have provided inspiration and insights. Many thanks also to Cynthia Krawczuk, Communications Coordinator for her guidance and expertise in the development and production of this newsletter.

Thank you,
Gina Bendo, RegN



Contact & Feedback

What I liked: _____

What I didn't like: _____

Things I would like to see in the next issue: _____

How I would like to contribute: _____

My question for Dr. Phil: _____

Other comments: _____

How to reach us

By mail:

403 Ontario St., Unit #1
St. Catharines, ON L2N
1L5

By phone:

905-687-3914 extension
543 (Gina)

By email:

gbendo@alzheimerniagara.ca

Remember when...

Gone with the Wind's Oscar wins made history?

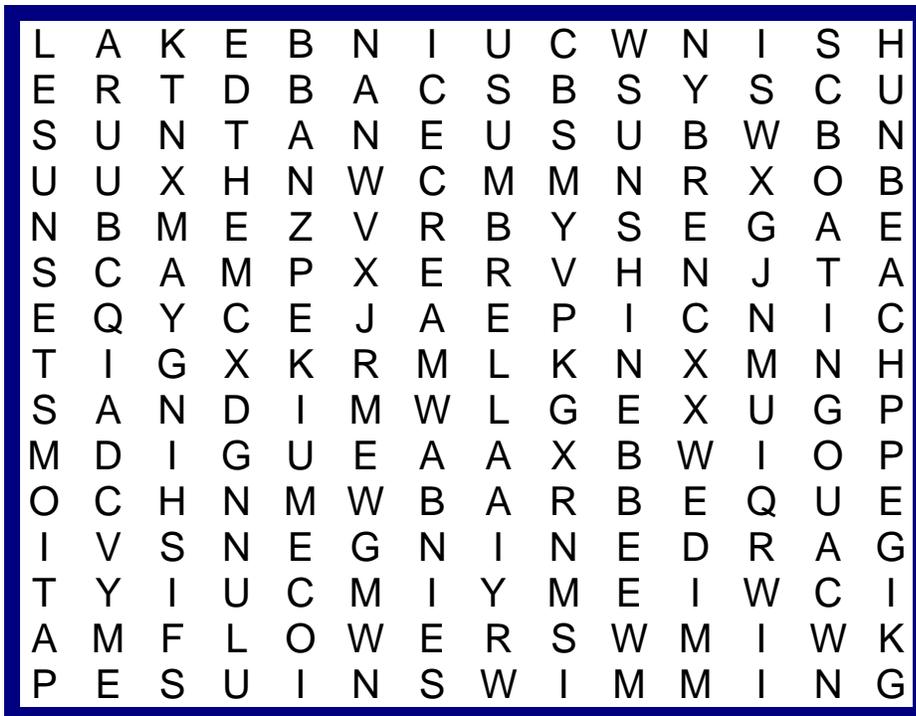
In 1940, *Gone with the Wind* won eight Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Actress. Historically speaking, this marked the first time in history that an African-American was nominated for and won an Oscar. Hattie McDaniel, who played "Mammy" a servant in the O'Hara household, took home the golden statue for Best Supporting Actress.



Sources: www.imdb.com and www.history.com

!Surprise!

Take a break from reading and challenge your brain in a fun way! Activities like word searches, crosswords, puzzles and Sudoku are great ways to exercise your brain.



Words to find

SUMMER
LAKE
WALKING
BEACH
SAND
ICECREAM
SUNSHINE

BOATING
FLOWERS
PATIO
SUNTAN
FISHING
GARDENING

PICNIC
UMBRELLA
SWIMMING
BARBEQUE
CAMP
SUNSETS

My Daily Journal

(SAMPLE)

Date: Friday, July 17, 2009

	APPOINTMENTS
<p>MORNING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breakfast – Today, I had some oatmeal, orange juice and strawberries• Any medications? Applied new Exelon patch <p>AFTERNOON:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lunch – I had a ham sandwich, a glass of milk and a brownie• Any medications? Vitamin pack taken with lunch <p>EVENING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supper – Spaghetti and meatballs with garlic bread and a glass of red wine	<p>10 am – Check-up with Dr. Smith – ask him about the cough that has been bothering me for 3 days</p> <p>2 pm – Hair appt. with Judy at the salon</p>

Outings I went to: I went to the doctors this morning. He gave me some cough medicine to make me feel better. He said I look well!

Phone calls: Someone called from the bank. I will ask my daughter, Sue to find out what that was about.

Visitors I had today: My old friend, Janet came by for some coffee and cookies. We sat outside and talked about her grandson's wedding. He is getting married in August and Janet is very excited. She drove me to my hair appointment after.

Thoughts for the day: Today was a good day. I hope tomorrow brings nice weather so I can do some gardening.