

## Memories and History Abound in Special Alzheimers Writing Class

The students, all lovers of literature and writing, sit around a long table with their black and white composition notebooks and pencils in this Thursday morning creative writing class.

The teacher, Niki Herd, UH Creative Writing doctoral candidate and Inprint Fellow, leads the class by engaging the students in various exercises where they may write about a memorable childhood experience, a poem written from someone else's perspective, or their reactions to a Hopper or Rothko painting.

After the exercises, they share their writings with the class where there's invariably support and encouragement for one another. They not only learn about writing techniques, but also about each other's lives.

What makes this creative writing workshop particularly poignant is that the students are all participants at Amazing Place, a day program for adults with mild to moderate dementia. Organized and funded by the Houston literary arts nonprofit Inprint, as part of their Senior Memoir Workshops, the class includes a former Viet Nam fighter pilot, law school professor, nurse, drama teacher, pediatrician and cancer researcher. Even though they may not remember what they had for breakfast or what they did the previous day, they can still recall and share, in intimate detail, stories from their past and thoughts about the present.

In this essay, participant Linda W. wrote about why she likes the class:

"My written thoughts are very important to me. They float through the air in front of my eyes and I would like to snag these thoughts & pin them to paper like John Steinbeck, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and other great writers have done through the centuries... I could pull down big, whole words from the clouds above my head and slap them around with my fists & pin them to paper so people could read about all the loves of my life."

Recently, Amazing Place hosted a celebration where the students read some of their stories and poems to the other participants, staff and family guests. There were smiles, tears and laughter around the room.

Most important, was the reminder that those with dementia still have so much to contribute as we hear their voices, their feelings and their memories through their writings.

To read more about the program and see other writing excerpts from the Amazing Place participants, go to Niki Herd's blog on Inprint's An

Open Book, at [www.anopenbookblog.org](http://www.anopenbookblog.org).

Since 1996, Amazing Place, located at 3735 Drexel, has been providing Houston's only five-day-a-week program exclusively devoted to adults with mild to moderate dementia.

The innovative curriculum focuses on fellowship, memory care and wellness and includes cognitive, physical, creative, spiritual and social stimulation. Amazing Place also offers support groups and education for caregivers and the community in dealing with brain health and dementia. For more information about other programs at Amazing Place, or to set up a visit, contact Carol Cooper, at 713.552.0420.



Adults with mild to moderate dementia participate in a writing class at Amazing Place.

## Caregiver Conference Focuses on "Courage to Care"

The Alzheimer's Association Houston & Southeast Texas Chapter invites the Greater Houston community to attend the annual *Caregiver Conference: The Courage to Care* on Friday, June 22.

This educational conference provides caregivers with information on topics related to both caring for someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia and on self-care. The conference will deliver presentations designed to build caregiver skills, boost confidence, and help reduce caregiver stress through self-care. Sessions will be presented in both English and Spanish.

Three informational sessions will address practical caregiving skills. Caregivers will learn how to communicate effectively with someone with dementia, as well as how to understand and respond to difficult dementia-related behaviors. Participants will also have the chance to get their questions answered during the "Ask the Experts Smart Bars," which will feature experts from several community organizations.

This year's conference will also feature two treats. At lunch, the *Together in Song Alzheimer's Chorus*, under the direction of Jenny

Hackney, will perform. Comprised of persons with early memory loss, care partners, and healthy volunteers, the chorus will serenade the conference attendees with selections from their Summer Concert.

In the afternoon, caregivers will be able to try out different self-care strategies at the Self-Care Fair. Alzheimer's caregivers are more likely to experience poorer health because of the demands of caregiving. The Self-Care Fair is a chance for caregivers to try out different, easy self-care strategies. Participants can try out chair yoga, emotional tapping, journaling, and

art-making.

The Caregiver Conference will be held at Chapelwood United Methodist Church, 11140 Greenbay St., from 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Registration fee is \$30. Fee includes a light breakfast and boxed lunch, all sessions, self-care fair, and onsite companion services (respite) for persons with dementia. **Persons needing respite must be pre-registered.**

For more information and to register, visit: <https://alztx.wixsite.com/caregiver-conference>.



**Friday, June 22, 2018**  
8:30 am – 3:30 pm  
Chapelwood United Methodist Church

alzheimer's association  
**2018 CAREGIVER CONFERENCE:  
THE COURAGE TO CARE**

Featuring Informational Sessions, "Ask the Expert" Smart Bars & a Self-Care Fair

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alzheimer's association  
**2018 CAREGIVER CONFERENCE:  
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**Friday, June 22, 2018 | 8:30 am - 3:30 pm**  
**Chapelwood United Methodist Church**  
11140 Greenbay St. | Houston, TX 77024

**FEATURING**  
INFORMATIONAL SESSIONS  
"ASK THE EXPERT" SMART BARS  
& A SELF-CARE FAIR

**EARLY REGISTRATION — \$20**  
**JUNE 9<sup>TH</sup> OR LATER — \$30**  
Fee includes a light breakfast and boxed lunch

**SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE**  
For more information or to register by phone,  
Contact Julie Kutac at [jkutac@alz.org](mailto:jkutac@alz.org) or call 800-272-3900

**FREE Respite Available for persons with dementia**  
Call 800-272-3900 to register. Pre-registration for this service is required by June 9.  
Special Thanks to our Conference Sponsor!

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