

Connection

SPRING 2022

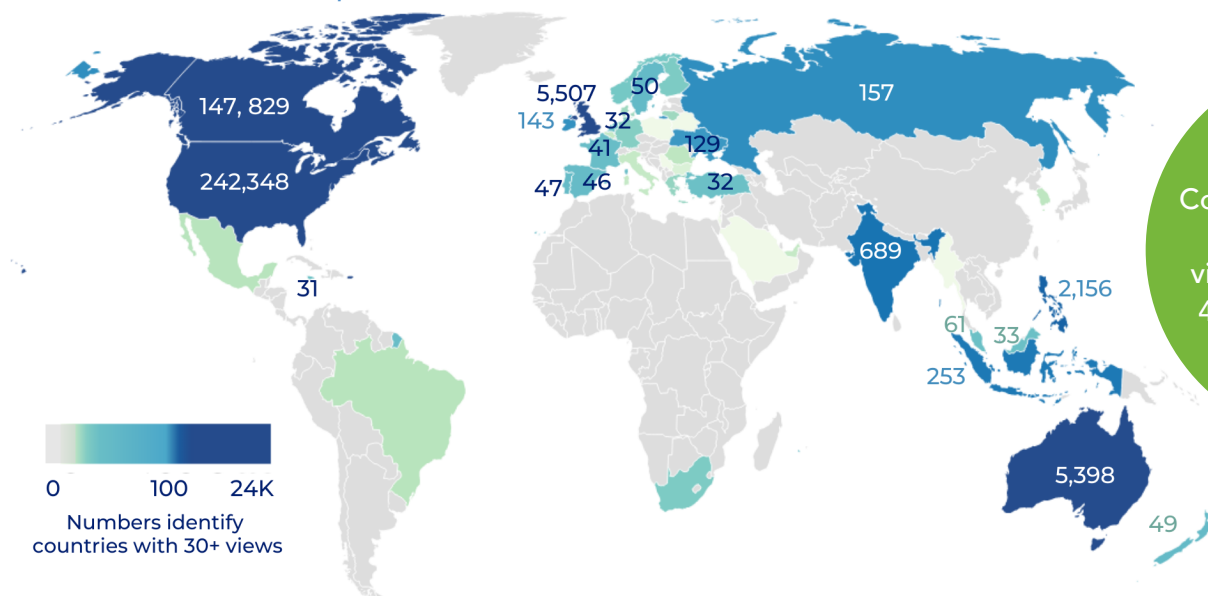
Establishing a replicable model for senior life that is focused on brain health, wellness and purposeful living



Abe's Garden
Community

Expanding Locally for *Global Impact*

Video views per country



Abe's Garden Community's caregiving videos have been viewed approximately 415,000 times across 41 countries.

By Lori Latusek

From the outset, our mission has been to care and share. Throughout 2021, Abe's Garden Community expanded our brain health best practices to serve all residents on our campus. Now, those who live in our independent and assisted living benefit from the evidence-based care and engagement model we provide to memory support residents. And we also offer three programs to extend our elevated level of care to those experiencing memory loss who live off campus.

Simultaneously, since opening our Memory Care Center of Excellence in 2015, Abe's Garden Community continuously seeks opportunities to positively influence dementia care and engagement throughout the United States and around the globe. As our mission states, we are establishing a **replicable model** for senior life focused on brain health, wellness and purposeful living. Abe's Garden Community has created multiple channels to successfully share best practices in dementia care, engagement and design – and has already achieved international impact.

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We achieve the broadest reach from our **Educational Video Series** that offers tips to those providing care to anyone living with dementia. This resource, which covers a dozen topics, is available via our website and YouTube channel. Thanks to our generous, faithful philanthropic partners who provide continued, unrestricted contributions, the videos are offered free of charge. **Since launching in 2017, the caregiving videos have been viewed approximately 415,000 times throughout 46 states and 40 international countries, stretching as far as Norway, Greece and New Zealand.**

In Australia, a dementia education and awareness program called *Dementia Monday's* utilizes our *Communication* video. Trainer Sarah-Kaye Page is thankful for this tool as the program is slated to expand across the country. "The video is a great resource to help people understand why these communication tips are essential," says Page. "The video is clear, simple, and easy to understand."

And Nadja Lilli, who cares for her mother in Italy, relies on our videos for valuable advice. "In hard and difficult times with my mother, who was diagnosed with vascular dementia in 2011, I always think of the tips in the videos," she shares. "They have helped me very much. I love the explanation of behaviors of dementia."

Closer to home, our on-site **Immersion Training Program** has helped coach industry professionals from a handful of states including Minnesota and New Jersey, who were looking for our expertise before building or enhancing their memory care offerings.

Decision-makers from Church Home LifeSpring in Fort Valley, Georgia, toured Abe's Garden Community in December 2021 before breaking ground on their memory care building. "Our visit inspired us," says Administrator Dawn Dunbar, LNHA. "We immediately contacted our architect after noting design elements that reduced exit seeking and increased the secure, seamless flow of the community. And we re-vamped our programming after seeing Abe's Garden Community residents, regardless of their ability level, happily involved in some type of meaningful activity. It was so refreshing!"


Abe's Garden Community was top of mind when Mercy Medical Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, began looking for residential centers of excellence in dementia care.

"Our tour in 2017 was enlightening and educational," says Kathy Good, Director of the Family Caregivers Center of Mercy and the DeWolf Family Innovation Center for Aging & Dementia. "The knowledge we gained regarding resident engagement, staff training/evaluation, and thoughtful living environments inspired us to think big and boldly when planning HallMar Village, our 237-door senior living community. We came away with a fresh perspective on building design, food, art, access to outdoor spaces, and gardening."

During their visit, our early-stage dementia support and engagement program, Abe's Garden Community Group, inspired their approach to starting a pilot program at St. Paul's United Methodist Church. "We were fortunate to have had the opportunity to visit and learn from the best and are excited about the ways we can incorporate similar elements into our own facilities to provide the very best care to the individuals we serve in the Cedar Rapids area," adds Good.

One tour with a team from Westminster Oaks in Tallahassee, Florida, inspired independent resident George Fong to make a memorial gift to fund an outdoor water feature like the one he saw in the Abe's Garden Community memory support courtyard. Fong shares, "Over the years, residents, team members, and visitors will relax on the benches and enjoy the soothing sounds of the water hitting the rocks and pebbles. Connection to nature is proven to help evoke memories long forgotten."

And Abe's Garden Community was internationally recognized as a groundbreaker in dementia design in the World Alzheimer Report 2020.

This global reach is only possible because of generous contributors, committed volunteers, and passionate, dedicated team members. We are extremely humbled by the number of people nationally and around the world who have been impacted by our mission. 



Representatives from Mercy Medical Center and Presbyterian Homes & Services toured Abe's Garden Community in August 2019.

Photo courtesy of Mercy Medical Center

NEW ONLINE SERIES FOR TEAM MEMBERS:

Brief Videos To Provide Consistent Education

Abe's Garden Community is developing a new series of educational videos as part of our commitment to provide team members with consistent supplemental skills training and increase performance and satisfaction. Developed by Mattie Brady, MSN, AGPCNP-BC, GS-C, in collaboration with John Zeisel, PhD, President and Founder of The I'm Still Here® Foundation and the Hearthstone Institute, the videos teach best practices in dementia care.

"As part of my doctoral degree at Johns Hopkins, I was tasked to create and implement a quality improvement project," says Brady. "I thought of the unique model and care provided at Abe's Garden Community and wanted to focus on an educational program to further empower direct caregivers. Research demonstrates that when staff is trained in dementia care, residents have a better quality of life, and caregivers have increased confidence and job satisfaction. I was inspired to create videos with interactive elements to stop and think about how to manage certain scenarios or reflect on individual experiences."

The videos cover a wide range of important topics, including:

- Reactive behaviors
- Communication
- Dining
- Elder abuse
- Purposeful engagement
- Pain management
- Promoting independence
- Late-stage dementia and end-of-life care

The 15–30 minute videos may be viewed during an on-site orientation or remotely in order to better accommodate scheduling issues that typically arise due to 24-hour staffing requirements. We anticipate this approach will increase the consistency and timeliness of training for team members.

Abe's Garden Community will be evaluating the success of these videos through pre- and post-viewing knowledge surveys as well as routine team member observations for demonstrated competencies in related training subjects. Our goal is to share these videos beyond our campus so other communities can teach the same best practices in dementia care. Additionally, we hope this valuable resource will help communities better retain staff through improved education and an increase in confidence.

This video series, which will be implemented in the coming months, is made possible thanks to philanthropic partners, including the Care Foundation of America, Inc.



Graduate of Johns Hopkins Doctor of Nursing Practice program Mattie Brady discusses various dementia care best practices in the new videos.

Art **DRAWS A RANGE OF BENEFITS**

By Emily Russell

ART BENEFITS WELL-BEING

Studies show that creating art is a brain-healthy endeavor. And art therapy is an evidence-based approach for improving physical and mental health. Benefits include increased joy, reduced feelings of depression and stress, enhanced motor skills and cognitive function, renewed sense of purpose and accomplishment, new thought processes, and improved memory.

"Creating art of any kind – painting, sculpture, dance, singing, theatre improvisation – elicits hardwired brain skills that are not affected by Alzheimer's and other dementias," says John Zeisel, PhD, whose *I'm Still Here*® philosophy drives engagement approaches throughout Abe's Garden Community. "For this reason, art engagement can be an effective treatment for dementia symptoms and can often replace the agitation, anxiety, aggression and apathy commonly experienced by people living with memory challenges. The same positive effects can be seen in those living independently who experience milder memory problems."

Additionally, art may serve as an alternate channel of communication to express thoughts and feelings, especially when seniors have impaired language abilities and are unable to verbalize their feelings.

Abe's Garden Community values these benefits and integrates art in group and one-to-one engagement activities with independent living, assisted living and memory support residents and program participants. "There is something so special about engaging in art with someone," beams Abe's Garden Community Life Engagement Coordinator Maggie Stiffler, MT-BC. "Inspiration and creativity are crucial as humans. As we get older, it can be harder to dig into those, but it's important that we do."

INTEGRATING ART INTO YOUR LIFE

Whether you're looking to incorporate creating art into your own routine as a brain-healthy exercise or to integrate it into activities for someone living with dementia, you can choose and customize what works best. The Life Engagement team at Abe's Garden Community incorporates various art types and mediums into activities and focuses on the abilities and interests of each artist.

"The use of art therapy is applicable to all ability levels. However, choosing the right medium can make for a more positive experience and impact," Stiffler notes. "It's important for those living with dementia to work with easy-to-use art supplies."

Our recommended senior art projects and mediums (starting with the easiest) include:

- **Sensory paintings**
- **Magazine collages**
- **Coloring mandalas** and other designs with colored pencils, markers or crayons
- **Watercolors** on paper
- **Acrylic or tempera paint** on canvas
- **Collaborative quilling** (rolled paper art) in a frame

Your art may not end up in a museum, but it's about the journey, not the destination. "What I love is the pride the residents feel when they finish their pieces," smiles Stiffler.



Sensory art is great for those who have fine-motor skill challenges. It is a creative textile activity. Place various paint colors on a canvas and seal it in a large plastic bag. The artist moves the paint around with their fingers from the outside of the bag to create a unique piece of art. Remove it from the bag to dry and display.



Magazine collages are wonderful for reminiscence and discussion. They can be created with items you likely already have at home. Those who have verbal challenges may tell a story through pictures.



Seniors (with or without mild memory loss) may enjoy **acrylic or tempera paint** on canvas as a brain-healthy activity. A variety of step-by-step tutorials can be accessed on YouTube. You can substitute colors as needed. Note, tempera paint is washable; acrylic is not.



Use this QR code to watch a short video of beautiful creations by our memory support residents and program participants.



Our Commitment TO PROVIDING AND RESEARCHING MUSIC THERAPY

"For many of my neurological patients, music can provide access, even when no medication can, to movement, to speech, to life. For them, music is not a luxury but a necessity."

– Oliver Sacks, MD (1933-2015)

By Lori Latusek

Music is powerful. It can instantly stimulate emotions, inspire imagination and surface memories. And for those living with cognitive challenges like dementia, music therapy has the capacity to decrease depression, stress, agitation and behavioral issues. In fact, emerging research indicates that music can often reduce the need for pharmacological interventions and improve the quality of life for people with a variety of cognitive challenges.

Abe's Garden Community embraces the positive impacts of music and incorporates a variety of music engagement activities throughout each week. From drum circle to choir group, dance parties and much more, residents are often found gleefully participating in a musical activity or singing along to a live performance. Program participants and in-home care clients also benefit from group and individual 90-minute sessions with our board-certified music therapist and Life Engagement Coordinator, Maggie Stiffler, MT-BC.

"People have a special connection with music that doesn't exist with anything else," says Stiffler. "As a Music Therapist, I get to facilitate beautiful moments and use music to help. The way a resident starts singing every single word to a song written 100 years ago, moves their hand side to side with their eyes closed, or tells a story about their life relating to the song is amazing. I am so honored to share music with them every day."

To supplement this offering and continuously improve programming, we recently became a clinical practicum site for Belmont University's Music Therapy Program.

Funded by an anonymous philanthropic partner, this collaboration allows us to educate and train music therapists specifically in improving the lives of older adults.

Additionally, we are working with the Kim & Glen Campbell Foundation in a mutual pursuit to provide a dedicated, controlled environment for music research, engagement and therapy. Our joint goal with this initiative is to create groundbreaking research that better understands the effects of music on the brain, especially in recalling memories, improving mood and encouraging meaningful engagement.

Stay tuned as our music therapy and research programs develop.



Music Therapist Maggie Stiffler with a memory support resident.

Photo by Emily Russell

Staff Spotlight

Kylie Stratton, Senior Director, Home Care

By Emily Russell



Kylie joined the Abe's Garden Community team in March 2020, just before the pandemic hit Middle Tennessee and the globe. With 15 years of industry experience, she was hired to run our licensed home care agency,

Abe's Garden at Home.

She was set to handle day-to-day operations, such as hiring and training staff, coordinating schedules on and off campus, developing care plans, overseeing the delivery of care, and ensuring client satisfaction.

But with the lockdown occurring shortly after she started this role, Kylie was met with a new set of challenges ... and opportunities. Opportunities that she quickly acted on to provide additional benefits to seniors living on campus and in the surrounding areas.

Families were reaching out in search of ways to provide engagement and socialization for their loved ones at home. "To help address this gap in care, we decided to take the life-engagement approach we use on campus into people's homes," says Stratton. This meant adding personalized activities like exercise, art and music to our typical services of companionship, meal preparation and light housekeeping.

The results have been rewarding for Kylie and her clients.

"My favorite success stories are when I hear from families that their loved one is suddenly engaged and interested in an activity that they haven't shown interest in for a long time," Stratton smiles. "Our Home

Engagement Coordinators have helped many of our clients rediscover lost loves like art, gardening and music."

Caregivers are benefitting from this service, too. "Having home care in place provides much-needed respite for family caregivers to focus on their own mental health and well-being," notes Stratton.

In 2021, LeadingAge Tennessee recognized Kylie for solving an urgent need among seniors during the pandemic and presented her with an Innovator in Action award.

When asked what she likes most about being a part of the Abe's Garden Community team, Stratton says, "I love being able to interact with residents daily and be active in their lives. I feel fortunate to work with such an experienced, dedicated and hardworking group of people. It brings me joy to work in a community that I truly believe in and whose mission so closely aligns with my values. Plus, every day is different, and it is never boring at Abe's Garden Community!"



Kylie assesses a potential Abe's Garden at Home client.



**Use this QR code for
more information about
Abe's Garden at Home.**

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"The next time you look at your child's Little League team or your grandchild's dance recital troupe ... or the next time you gaze over the crowd at your civic club meeting or the congregation in your church or synagogue, say to yourself, 'If all of these people – young or old, from every walk of life – live into their 80s, half the group will suffer from some sort of dementia ... most likely Alzheimer's disease.'

That's how big and pervasive the problem is. While every penny directed toward brain research to find causes of and cures for Alzheimer's is important, we all face at least a generation of coping with this disease until the day a cure is announced. And until that day, we will help people cope and care."

– Then LeadingAge President and CEO,
Larry Minnix, in 2014

Friends,

Wow. It's hard to believe that what Larry Minnix wrote eight years ago is as true today as it was then. Alzheimer's does not stop for COVID, economic changes, or the recent crisis in Ukraine. Alzheimer's continues to break hearts in addition to the heartbreak we see on the news every day.

And YOU are helping those on a dementia journey cope and care. This issue of *Connection* highlights a few of our many initiatives to help your loved ones near and far, including caregiver support and training, meaningful engagement opportunities, and encouraging overall wellness through all our programs.

You enable us to offer this level of attention and focus. Will you send a gift today to help us continue to excel and innovate? Your gift now may be given in honor or memory of someone special and will directly help those coping and caring for someone on the dementia journey.

Thank you for your support,

Chris Coelho, MMHC, Interim Executive Director

