

SUPPORT FOR ADULTS WITH MEMORY LOSS AND THEIR FAMILIES

CELEBRATING OVER 35 YEARS OF SERVICE

OPICA's recent blog post, "How Alzheimer's emerged from the shadows," garnered a lot of interest posing the question: Is there still the stigma regarding Alzheimer's? The post features an article by Sarah Neville that appeared in the December 2017 issue of the Financial Times in which she shares the story of her grandmother's struggle with the disease.

Alzheimer's disease is an international epidemic impacting a growing number of families around the world. Yet it is often misunderstood, preventing people from seeking medical treatment and securing desperately needed support. And yes, despite progress being made, the stigma of Alzheimer's is still significant. Think back to when cancer was the whispered "c" word. That's what we are dealing with. People who don't want to talk about a disease that is impacting 1 in 8 adults over the age of 65 and nearly 50 percent of people over 85.

“ The single most important shift in our attitudes to Alzheimer's, and other forms of dementia, was the discovery that it was an illness rather than an inexorable consequence of ageing. ”

Dr. Martin Rossor, a leading expert in dementia research argues there is something distinctive – and distinctively courageous – about the decision to speak publicly regarding having Alzheimer's. "There's always been this worry that because you're robbed of your cognition, somehow your comments, your views, your status are diminished much more than [with] cancer." He points to the late Glen Campbell, the country and western singer, who continued to tour after his Alzheimer's diagnosis, his experiences chronicled through a documentary, *I'll Be Me* that candidly exposed the reality of living and dying with the disease. For his family, Mr. Campbell's decision to share his story so publicly meant it was "on his terms rather than on the terms dictated by the illness or dictated by others labeling or stigmatizing or [having] other kinds of responses to the condition."



There is no shame in having Alzheimer's – it's a disease. Talk openly about it. Every time someone whispers Alzheimer's or ignores the signs of dementia – speak up. Communicate the facts about dementia. Accurate information helps clear up misconceptions about the disease. If you or someone close to you has the disease, you can be a part of the solution by speaking out and educating others. Foster a positive way of communicating, explaining to others what it's like to have the disease, how you and your loved one are coping and what projects you have planned for the future. Be open and direct about the diagnosis and engage the person in a discussion about Alzheimer's disease and the need for methods of prevention, treatment and a cure.

Denial of the disease by others is "about them" and not about you. There are those who may be quick to think people living with Alzheimer's are simply going through the normal aging process. This is a perfect time to educate them. Visit www.opica.org for resources to help you be a better advocate for understanding Alzheimer's.

“ There is no shame in having Alzheimer's — it's a disease. Talk openly about it. ”

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OPICA's roots run deep. If we have omitted the name of an OPICA Board member who has passed away, please let us know so that we may include him or her in future publications.

A Message from Leadership



Dear Friends of OPICA:

As we prepare to honor esteemed Board of Directors member Joyce Leanse at our 2018 Forget-Me-Not Luncheon, now is a good time to lift up some other amazing women whose exuberance and hard work have made OPICA possible.

We're talking about the OPICA

Associates, who from OPICA's founding in 1979 planned one smashing event after another to raise money for what was then a novel experiment: a program to enrich the lives of individuals with memory loss.

These women, as many as a hundred of them, met at the home of OPICA founders Ted and Rita Williams. With her inimitable style, Rita hosted luncheons (remembered for their purple tablecloths) where the Associates planned their events.

And what events they were! Billy Crystal concerts. Days at the races. Lunch at the UCLA Faculty Center followed by Baryshnikov at Royce Hall. Dinner followed by *The Lion King* or *Hairspray* at the Pantages. Chocolate parties.

Inviting family, friends, and friends of friends to these events, the Associates not only raised lots of money for OPICA, but they spread the word about its groundbreaking work. And many of the Associates also volunteered at OPICA's day program, assisting with activities, socializing with the members, and helping them into and out of the restroom.

With Ted's passing and with fewer women able to join the ranks as volunteers, the OPICA Associates formally came to an end in 2010. By that time they had amassed a substantial fund that continues to sustain OPICA in the form of emergency reserves. Thanks to the Associates, if disaster strikes, OPICA can make payroll. Our members will continue to be served.

We'd like especially to lift up our oldest Board member Shirley Kleiman, who was one of the original Associates and still oversees the Board Reserve Fund. Thank you, Shirley. And thanks to all the Associates for their extraordinary service to OPICA.

Mary Bomba
Board Chair

Mary Michlovich
Executive Director



What does it mean to be spiritual?

By Michael Tidstrand

Having worked at OPICA as an intern for about 3 years, I have become accustomed to interacting with and supporting individuals who are struggling to simply maintain an accurate self-awareness of who they are. When I heard we would be bringing on a new “chaplain intern” named Judy, I immediately became curious about what this title meant and how it differs from the many counseling interns we already have. I got a chance to sit down with Judy and ask her some questions about the nature of the work she will be doing.

Michael: So Judy, tell me about what you want to do in your time here at OPICA.

Judy: I strive to enrich the lives of our members by sitting with them and giving them a safe place to talk and share the stories of their lives and of their loved ones. With other members, I simply look into their eyes and hold their hands. In doing this, they feel a sense of connectedness and know that they are not alone. I keep my ears and heart open, always looking around the room to see where I am most needed. In this way, I follow their lead and go with them wherever they like, whether that's singing, dancing, or simply being.

M: How did you first become interested in spiritual wellness?

J: My father passed away one month before his 89th birthday. Since he was so frail toward the end of his life, my mother constantly worried about him. I helped in any way I possibly could, including coming over to visit him and bringing sponge cakes. Whenever I went to hug him, he would be sitting in a rigid, withdrawn position. I would say, “Dad, this is not acceptable. You need to put your arms around me when you hug me, okay? I want you to hug me.” From that moment on, he would sit up every time he saw me to give me a hug. One day, I told him we would be going to Ocean Avenue in Santa Monica, which was always one of his favorite places to go with my mom. Even though my mother insisted that it was too windy, I helped to get him out of the car so that he could enjoy the splendor of the outside world. After I brought them home, my father turned to me, gave me a hug, and said “You lifted my spirits.” It was this experience that made me realize the significance of spiritual health in all our lives.

M: It must be quite an adjustment to pursue a second career at this later stage of your life. What kind of education did you need to do this kind of work?

J: With a background in psychology, education, and health advocacy, I knew I wanted to pursue something that involved not just the mind and the body, but also the spirit. When people experience a meaningful connection, their quality of life improves. To that end, I decided to attend the Academy for Jewish Religion to pursue a master's degree in religious studies with a certificate in chaplaincy.

With Judy on board, OPICA now offers spiritual care groups for spouses, adult children, and relatives every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month. The theme of these groups is “Building Hearty Spirits.” For more information about OPICA's new spiritual care groups, please contact Michael Tidstrand at (310) 478-0226 or michael@opica.org

LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA



It's been shown with other diseases that exercise can have beneficial effects. Even moderate exercise can markedly lower blood pressure and improve cardiovascular health. Dementia is a disease that impacts changes in cognition and memory that affect movement and physical activity performance in many ways. Evidence from studies of the dementia population tells us that aerobic activities are known to enhance brain functioning and improve mood, as are strength-training programs. As dementia progresses in individuals, fine and gross motor skills may deteriorate and additional decline may take place in strength, power, balance and coordination. The result is a loss of many functional activities, including the ability to remember how to do something as basic as walking. A well-planned exercise program can mitigate problems arising from the declining physical and mental health of someone with dementia.

OPICA exercise activities take into account the loss of short-term memory when there is no guarantee that an individual will remember tasks and actions from week to week or during a single session. An individual with dementia may have a variable concentration span even when activities are repeated rhythmically. Program staff, aware that dementia changes a person's body and spatial orientation, conducts low impact aerobics, chair exercises, Tai Chi and Yoga for the Brain™, in addition to daily walks in the park. Close monitoring of participants' engagement in activities

throughout the day informs staff when creating individualized programs.

OPICA's Adult Day Program incorporates activities that promote living well with dementia and maintaining the highest possible level of independence and mobility. Physical exercise, social and/or cognitively engaging activities are combined to create a structured and encouraging environment that enables individuals coping with memory loss to maintain self-esteem and self-worth.

"What's good for the heart is good for the brain"

SAVE THE DATE

June 14, 2018

OPICA's 13th Annual
Forget-Me-Not
Luncheon

Honoring

Joyce Leanse

OPICA is privileged to honor Joyce Leanse for her significant contributions to the Alzheimer's community.

Joyce Leanse combines a calm grace with a steely resolve to get things done—attributes that have made her indispensable to the OPICA board, on which she has served for thirteen years.

As her three sons can attest, she used those same qualities to raise them to be the fine men they are today; to complete her MPH at UCLA while caring for her immediate and extended family; to move with her husband Jay to Washington D.C. and there join the National Council on the Aging, where for sixteen



years she was its Director of Senior Centers. During that time, she established a leadership group and developed training programs for Adult Day Care staff and others serving older adults. Working with representatives from some of the country's finest group programs for older adults, Joyce generated standards for both Senior Centers and Adult Day Care. When she and Jay returned to Los Angeles, she continued working for NCOA as its Western Regional Director, specifically overseeing work-training sites for older workers.

After her retirement, Joyce looked for ways to use her skills and her awareness of the needs of older adults, especially those with age-related mental impairment. Thus, OPICA, to which she was introduced by her friend Marilyn Levin. Even through Jay's illness and death, Joyce made time for her work with OPICA. Now, while she actively participates in Leo Baeck Temple's Community of Elders and faithfully attends every game, performance, and birthday of her nine grandchildren, OPICA continues to be the recipient of her wisdom, her energy, her dedication, and her love.

For more information, please contact Stacey Barrett at (310) 478-0226 or Stacey@opica.org

OPICA's nurturing and caring environment provides respite and peace of mind for caregivers of adults with memory loss.

OPICA helps guide families with a loved one challenged by memory loss along their unique journeys, reduces their stress and gives them hope.

OPICA enables members to experience an overall improved quality of life and to maintain dignity, meaning, a sense of self-worth and to avoid isolation.



A BITTERSWEET GOOD-BYE

To my OPICA Family,

I have such mixed feelings leaving OPICA. I can safely say I've never loved a job as much as my role at OPICA, and will be eternally grateful for the opportunities I've been given. From my first day as a trainee I found OPICA to be a special place, one filled with love, respect and possibility; a place that, despite dealing with dementia, kindness, patience and creativity are the order of the day. I knew I'd found my home, never thinking that that first day would blossom into eleven years of service. When I looked around in my first week I discovered staff that'd been here the longest time, wondering what might be the draw to stay so long. Of course I soon understood.

I've really appreciated seeing OPICA flourish over the past decade as we've added new programs: Brain Train, individualized breakout groups, art show, bereavement group, and an expanded intern program. OPICA gave me the opportunity to develop my practice as a Marriage and Family Therapist and gather all the hours I needed to get licensed. This has been a gift I will take with me into my new life with my husband Laurence in Ventura. I have no doubt OPICA will continue to flourish and be the remarkable, delightful center that it is.

With gratitude and appreciation,

Emily Carvill

*Associate Director, Counseling Center
Program Director for the Adult Day Program*



OPICA is Continually Striving to Improve its Services

OPICA evaluates the impact and outcomes of its services through an annual Family & Caregiver Services Satisfaction survey and the results are in: 93% of respondents report that bringing their loved one to OPICA delayed placing them in a residential setting. 29% said their loved had increased mobility; 22% reported that they had improved sleep.

The survey was adapted this year to include questions raised by constituent focus groups we used last spring. Are families interested in a Saturday program? Do families want extended hours for the Adult Day Program? 60% of our families would bring their loved one to OPICA and increase the number of days they're at OPICA if additional scholarship funds were available. 45% would like extended hours and 65% are interested in a Saturday program.

In response to the survey results, we will be providing extended hours of operation two days per week, from the current schedule, 9:00 am-4:00 pm to begin at 8:00 am and end at 5:00 pm. We are also considering offering the Adult Day Program on Saturday (once per month) and offer an education component for caregivers.

Tributes and Memorials

OPICA Tribute Cards honor, commemorate, and recognize life's most important events with a unique message of care, compassion and joy. We express appreciation to the individuals listed below who contributed to OPICA in the form of a tribute between July 1 and December 31, 2017.

In Loving Memory of

Sheldon Cohen

Shirley Kleiman

Dorothy Essick

Beverly Unger Brodsky
Dr. Aryeh and Sally Edelist
Janet Noah

Garth Gragg

Ron and Teresa Riddle

Middie and Dick Geisberg

Barak Raviv

Jay Hoffstein

Alexandra Gold
Sherrill Kushner

Leon Nitz

Shirley Levine

Alice Parrish

Robert and Mary Baker
Mary Bomba
Shirley Kleiman
Terry Meyers
Sharon Meyers
Charlotte Schwartz

Hal Perliter

Shirley Kleiman

Lou Reisman

Cary Reisman

Barbara Schwimmer

Ron Abramson
Robbie Diamond

David Sugarman

Phyllis Bellano

Jerry Trager

Phyllis Bellano

In Celebration of

Andrea Ackerman's 65th Birthday

Robert and Johann Lesser
Sheri Samotin

Jacqueline Gottlieb's Birthday

Rita Loew

Rita Loew's Birthday

Jennifer Loew and Andy Davis

Matthew Levinson

Nancy Levinson

Barbara Weinstock's Birthday

Elaine Lubkin

In Honor of

Nora and Paul Bohn

Melissa Alt

Katherine Brown-Saltzman

Barry Bortnick

Lily Coleman

Ruth Coleman

Sheila Goldman

Barbara and Gilbert Dembo

Dan Geisberg

Al and Becky Harutunian

Lisa Holtzman

Arline Agay

Gail Holtzman

Linda Radell

Marilyn Levin

Jacqueline Gottlieb

Rita Loew

Jacqueline Gottlieb

Joyce Leanse

Jacqueline Gottlieb
Alvin and Gloria Lanfeld

Barbara Leanse

Aaron and Sari Eshman
Michael McGuire

Helen Marcus

Jacqueline Gottlieb
David and Edie Levin

Alan Rochlin Markowitz

Estelle Elinson

Thelma Neworth

Dave and Brenda Winter

Sue Pomerantz

Linda Radell

Teresa Riddle

Phyllis Bellano
Phyllis Margolis
Sue and Reuben Pomerantz





OPICA Adult Day Program and Counseling Center

11759 Missouri Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90025

(310) 478-0226
www.opica.org

Adult Day Program Hours:

9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
Monday—Friday

Counseling Center Hours:

8:30 a.m.—7:00 p.m.
Monday—Friday

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SAVE THE DATE
Thursday, June 14, 2018

OPICA's
Forget-Me-Not
Luncheon
Honoring
Joyce Leanse

For more information see page 5