

Marco's Dementia Respite Program Begins



DIMENSIONS OF DEMENTIA

Shirley Woolaway

Before my husband Tom and I moved to Marco Island in 2010, we were snowbirds living in Pennsylvania most of the year. When Tom's Alzheimer's progressed to the moderate stage, he attended a day care program thirty-five minutes from home. One facet of the decision to move to Marco Island permanently was the availability of an island day care program just ten minutes from our condo at an assisted living facility.

Having Tom in day care two and three times a week was a lifesaver to me. The break in my caregiving gave me time and space to take classes and do things that I enjoyed. The breaks helped me be a more positive caregiver, better equipped physically and emotionally to care for Tom when he was home. It was also a plus for Tom who enjoyed the day care activities, especially art and music therapy and interacting with others.

The assisted living facility closed in 2015, a year after Tom's death. After that, Marco residents had to search for day care and respite care in Naples, where it has been limited after one facility's lease was not renewed and another operation had licensure issues.

Now there is good news for Marco Island caregivers and their loved ones. A new dementia respite program has just begun at St. Mark's Episcopal Church on the corner of Collier Boulevard and East Elkcam Circle. Ten participants are enrolled, with room for four more, who will meet each Wednesday for four hours from 10:30 AM to 2:30 PM. Under the direction of staff selected by the Naples Senior Center with the help of th-



Submitted Photos
The dementia respite program at St. Mark's provides structured activities for participants.



Dr. Jaclynn Faffer

oroughly vetted volunteers, participants will interact with computer exercises using the Dakim Brain Fitness program, be queried on trivia or historical subjects and participate in art and music therapy. During the catered lunch, the volunteers will help guide conversation to encourage socialization. Following lunch, a meditation will give participants time to relax before their chair yoga exercise class. According to Dr. Jaclynn Faffer, president/CEO of Jewish Family Community Services (JFCS) of Southwest Florida that operates the senior center, the dementia respite programs are structured with no down time to give maximum benefit to participants.

Just three years ago the Naples Senior Center started their first dementia respite program at the north Naples site on Castello Drive. When it was successful, three more days/programs were added there, and with increased demand, several satellite programs were established.

Darlene Holan, licensed clinical social

worker on the JFCS staff, is directing the newest satellite program on Marco Island, officially called the Marco JFCS Dementia Respite Program. Holan also leads one dementia respite program at the senior center and two at satellite locations.

A second Marco Island dementia respite program is expected to begin early in 2018 on Mondays, also at St. Mark's Church, according to Dr. Faffer. Potential participants and volunteers continue to be interviewed for this program. Caregivers should contact Rhonda Eisenberg, JFCS geriatric social worker, for an appointment. Committed persons interested in volunteering should contact Marna Barany, manager of volunteer services, both at the senior center at 239-325-4444.

Brian Bremer, a Marco Island resident, recognized the need for a Marco Island dementia respite and suggested the idea to Dr. Faffer who was receptive to it. She spoke in April to the Alzheimer's Association Memory Loss/Caregiver Support Group at St. Mark's Church and believed the facility's Willis Center could function as a site for a

program. A steering committee was formed with Bremer's daughter, Brianne Bremer-Kennish functioning as project manager. At an informational meeting in late May, attended by 35 fulltime and seasonal Marco Island residents, 60 percent of the funding was pledged to launch the first stage of the program. That night, Dr. Faffer announced the expansion of the Naples Senior Center's dementia respite program to Marco Island. She added, "With one in nine seniors expected to experience some form of decline in the future, the need is great."

Fundraising for the new dementia program has continued with a benefit concert held at St. Mark's earlier this month featuring Naples folk singers, Barbara and Mark Johnston. Another fundraising event is expected to be held in the spring. Those interested in donating may contact Dr. Faffer at jfaffer@sjcsswfl.org or make donations to the JFCS Marco Island Dementia Respite program, and mail to JFCS, 5025 Castello Drive, Naples, FL 34103.

The expansion of the JFCS Dementia Respite Program is funded by additional gifts and grants plus a nominal fee of \$35 for daily participation in all programs. Scholarships are available for those unable to pay the full fee. The JFCS Dementia Respite Program is affiliated with Brookdale Foundation's National Group Respite Program.

In addition to respite programs, many other activities are offered at the Naples Senior Center. On the day I visited several months ago, about 20 people were enthusiastically following their tai chi instructor in moves challenging balance, while others were playing cards, mahjong, and chatting quietly or reading. Other activities include line and ballroom dancing, yoga, and classes in Spanish and Italian. On Wednesdays, several hundred seniors attend the luncheon, which is included in the center's annual membership fee. According to Dr. Faffer, thirty-five

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percent of the center's members are below the poverty line. They come to avoid isolation and often get involved with something they like to do. Five percent of those attending the luncheon arrive on eight to ten Collier Transit buses. Case management is also offered by the center with 142 people currently receiving care in their homes.

Yearly membership is open to all over 60 with a yearly \$15 fee. From 80 original members, the rolls have swelled to 1,300 today, while the center's budget has grown from \$400,000 with Dr. Faffer and two part-time employees to \$2.1 million today and 15 employees, according to Dr. Faffer. She added that \$50,000 was received from the state in 2016 with no funding from the county or federal governments last year.

Thinking about all the various offerings at the Naples Senior Center, I'm wondering, as you may be, whether such a center might someday be a possibility on Marco Island. Given the example of the new island dementia respite program, it only takes one dedicated motivator to find others passionate for the cause, work on funding, and voila, a new senior center could eventually appear on Marco Island.

Shirley Woolaway has an M. Ed. in counseling and worked in journalism, in business, and as a therapist in Pennsylvania. She has 25 years personal experience with dementia as a caregiver for family members with Alzheimer's disease, and nine years as the coordinator of an Alzheimer's Association memory loss/caregiver support group, earlier in Pennsylvania and now on Marco Island. We believe that Shirley's insights will prove helpful to many of our readers.

For help on all aspects of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias call the national Alzheimer's Association confidential, 24/7 helpline at 800-272-3900 or the local Bonita Springs office at 239-405-7008 for care consults and support group information. Also helpful with local educational programs, workshops, and support groups, is the Naples Alzheimer's Support Network, 239-262-8388.

Thor - Ragnarok: The Perfect Blend of Fantasy and Sci-Fi Action



REEL REVIEWS

By Matthew Mendisana

As 2017 draws to a close, we come to the last Marvel release for this year: "Thor – Ragnarok." The story follows Thor (Chris Hemsworth) as he searches for his father, Odin the King of Asgard (Anthony Hopkins). With Loki (Tom Hiddleston) at his side, the two eventually locate Odin, only to lose him once again, but not before he warns them of an approaching danger that threatens not only Asgard, but all realms in the cosmos. A threat known as Hela (Cate Blanchett), the Goddess of Death, a villainess so powerful that she's able to overpower the God of Thunder and destroy his legendary hammer Mjolnir.

Outmatched, the two retreat back to Asgard, only to be blown off course and thrown into a new world known as Sakaar, a planet built from junk and garbage. There, Thor is taken prisoner and brought before the ruler of Sakaar, the Grandmaster (Jeff Goldblum), to fight in his gladiatorial arena known as the Contest of Champions. Now trapped in this new world, Thor must prevail against the champion of the arena if he's to escape and find his way back to Asgard before Hela takes over and unleashes her undead army upon the other realms. A plan that's easier said than done, especially when Thor learns that



the Grandmaster's champion is none other than his old ally and fellow Avenger, the Incredible Hulk (Mark Ruffalo), who has no intention of forfeiting his title without a fight.

From beginning to end, this film is a blast. It's a perfect balance between Mystic Fantasy and Science Fiction with some of the best action scenes I've seen this year. After all, it's rare to find a movie that possesses scenes where our hero is battling demons in a fiery abyss one moment, then watching him battle spaceships across an alien city in another, before taking on an army of the undead. And that doesn't even cover the battle scenes with the Hulk and other heroes.

Besides the action, "Thor – Ragnarok" has to be one of the most hilarious films I've seen as well. This movie had both me, and the audience, laughing in our seats. While most of my praise is credited towards the writers, I have to give a hand to the actors for their timing and delivery. Because believe me, some of the lines in this movie could not have been easy to deliver with a straight face.

"Thor – Ragnarok" is rated PG-13 for intense sequences of Sci-Fi violence and action, along with brief suggestive material. This film is an example of why I love superhero movies, especially Marvel ones. "Thor – Ragnarok" is what you get when you take the fantasy and sword fights from "Lord of the Rings," the science and laser shootouts from "Star Wars," then take some superheroes, some comedy, and then throw them all into a blender. It's not something I would drink, but it's fun to watch. This is one movie that people of all ages will enjoy, especially with the holidays on the approach. Which is why the final score for "Thor – Ragnarok" is an 8.5 out of 10.

Marco Island resident and avid moviegoer, Matthew Mendisana is a Lynn University alumnus. While he possesses a bachelor's degree in science, it's the arts that attracted his attention. In his four years at Lynn, Matthew managed to achieve Magna Cum Laude status, earn three publications in the Lynn University magazine, make a short documentary featured in the university's Film Festival, and created a radio PSA that was later broadcasted overseas.

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