



September 2009

VAN FORUM

Alzheimer's Awareness

What can you do to prevent, understand, and treat dementia?

Have you ever forgotten where you parked your car? Is it normal aging or an early sign of Alzheimer's?

Catherine Johnson will help you sort it out, teaching you:

- The characteristics of normal, healthy aging.
- Lifestyle strategies to prevent cognitive decline.

- Ways to detect the signs and symptoms of dementia to support early diagnosis.
- Ways to enhance the therapeutic response to dementia treatments.

As Lori La Bey struggled with her mother's diagnosis, she experienced first hand the effects that Alzheimer's can have on one's life. Through story telling, she will give you practical tips and techniques for dealing with dementia. You will learn how to identify stress triggers, reduce combative behaviors, create remarkable moments, and diminish the turbulence as you walk through the maze of Alzheimer's disease.

Presenters:

- **Catherine Johnson**
PsyD, Licensed Psychologist,
Associated Clinic of Psychology
and licensed nursing
home administrator
- **Lori La Bey**
Alzheimer's Speaks

Questions? Need a ride? Call VAN at 651-917-4652.



Alzheimer's Awareness

September 8, 2009
10:30 AM to 12:30 PM

**Free and
Open to the Public**

Immanuel
Lutheran Church
104 Snelling Avenue S.
St. Paul, MN 55105

[Map to Immanuel
Lutheran Church](#)

In This Issue

Alzheimer's Awareness	1
So, What Was I Looking for? Normal Cognitive Aging	2
Elder Care Consultants' Class Offering	2
The Sand Trap	3
From the Chair	4
Volunteering Spotlight	5
Alzheimer's: Forgetting Piece by Piece	5
For Your Calendar	6
Dementia Project Receives National Innovations Award	7

Save the date
October VAN FORUM

**Protecting Minnesota's
Environment
and Saving Dollars**

October 13, 2009
10:30 AM to 12:30 PM

[Additional
information on page 6](#)

So, What Was I Looking for? Normal Cognitive Aging

By Catherine Johnson, PsyD, LP

We can relate to instances when we have forgotten where we parked the car, have misplaced our keys, or even possibly, have called one of our children by his or her sibling's name. We joke with others about this forgetfulness as a way to validate that our aging is normal and to accept the changes in our lives. Yet we may often wonder, "Is what I am experiencing a normal part of aging?" Knowing what is considered normal aging can help put our minds at ease.

Around age 50, it is normal to be a little more forgetful. As we age, our brains shrink, and we lose brain (neuron) cells and the connections between them. So what does a normal, "a little more forgetful" look like?

- First, our ability to recall information may become more difficult. We may find it harder to instantly recall information such as a person's name or when we scheduled an appointment.
- Second, multitasking is more challenging and our brains are less tolerant of distractions. Remembering where we put our wallets or purses may become a bit harder if we were preoccupied or trying to multitask when we laid them down.
- Third, it may take us a little longer to learn and retain new information or a new practice. If we are trying to learn something new or solve a new problem, we may find that we need more time to process the information and to feel confident that we understand it. This need is not because we are less intelligent but because the speed at which our brains process information has slowed down.

The brain may lose neuron cells and connections as we age, but strong evidence exists that this loss of cells in healthy individuals has few, if any, real world consequences. The brain has a much greater capacity than we require for the normal needs of our lifetimes, and new research indicates that we can create new

Elder Care Consultants' Class Offering

Alzheimer's as Invitation: Pain Management for the Family

Ellen Swanson, of [Elder Care Consultants](#), has developed a new class for families and caregivers affected by Alzheimer's. The class, invites families and caregivers to think of the disease from a new perspective. If you are interested in hosting this class, contact Mike Justin by phone at 612-805-5672 or by e-mail at mjustin@eldercc.us.

connections if we strive to maintain our cognitive health by actively learning new information and participating in new activities.

While our processing speed may slow down, our overall mental performance continues to be effective well into our 80s and beyond. Our ability to focus, concentrate, and create are not diminished by age. We may actually be more creative in later life, as we combine a strong sense of self with the talents and skills we have developed over a life span of practice and experience.

Our capacity to use our rich vocabulary and to articulate our values and beliefs continues to grow. Often with age comes tolerance, genuineness, serenity, and wisdom. Crystallized intelligence—the knowledge and skills that accumulate over a lifetime—is at its peak in late life.

The Sand Trap

By Lori La Bey

I grabbed my five iron from my golf bag, turned, and walked toward my ball. The smell of fresh-cut grass filled my nostrils. The deep, rich, green grass, providing stark contrast as it nestled against the bleached white sand, looked beautiful, yet that view was nothing as compared to what my eyes saw next.

My mother, a large woman in her sixties, with short, salt-and-pepper, curly hair, lay on her belly in the sand trap. Her big arms stretched over her head. Each finger towered to the knuckles with diamond rings, one on top of the other, ending in a tip of perfectly applied red polish. Her cupped hands trapped the sand as she pulled her arms down and around, in perfect breaststroke form.

I watched in amazement. The sand swooshed loudly in my ears. I could hear each grain of sand scraping against another as she swam. Her head turned sideways as she took in a breath of air, and then she rotated her head back into the sand, slightly raised to adjust for the texture. The confidence and calmness on my mother's face shined like a beacon of light on a pitch-black summer evening. She swam in the warm sand to safety.

My mind flashed back about twenty years, remembering that my mother had always been a great swimmer, and I saw that her old skills as a lifeguard were still strong and intact.

I thought to myself, "My God, how are we going to get her out of there? She really thinks she is in the water." Sadness hit me for a brief moment, and then the humor of the situation touched my heart like no other time in my life. I smiled and laughed as I watched her in amazement. My mother's child-like state of mind was rescuing her. She felt safe and in control in this imagined place, in the water. My mother's Alzheimer's disease has left her more focused and purposeful and more peaceful than ever. The faith, belief, and power that she appeared to hold in this moment was incredible.

"Mom, can I help you up?" I asked as I continued to watch. She abruptly stopped swimming. Her face looked confused as I brought her back to reality. We were golfing. She had fallen in a sand trap. "Are you okay? Let me help you up," I said in a soft voice accompanied by a warm, friendly smile. She seemed to connect with both immediately and smiled back at me. "Okay, Lori. That would be good." Then she burst into laughter, not just a giggle but a hard solid belly laugh. Her eyes were joyful yet glistened with tears, and as she lay on her stomach in the bleached grains

of sand, my mother seemed to realize for just a second how comical life can be.



Illustration by Harry Pulver of Artworks

Reach Lori La Bey, owner of *Alzheimer's Speaks* and *Senior Lifestyle Trends*, at www.AlzheimersSpeaks.com, or 651-216-5413. Check out her blog at www.AlzheimersSpeaks.Wordpress.com.

From the Chair

Leaving a Legacy

So where did the summer go? I am struck with how fast life is racing by. It seems like just yesterday that my granddaughters could hardly walk and now they are running like the wind. Knowing I'm caught on the treadmill of life, I need to ask myself: Am I doing the things that really matter? Am I doing anything that will leave a lasting legacy?

Do I want my grandchildren to remember me by the size of my bank account or by the differences I have made in theirs' and others' lives?

Small things like mentoring a child, volunteering at the local food shelf and being active in your local community are good places to start to make a difference. For me, working with the Vital Aging Network has helped me find purpose and make a contribution.

There are, of course, side benefits to becoming involved. A whole new network of friends. The feeling of accomplishment. A sense of belonging. These are more important to me than a paycheck.

Hopefully my contributions with the Vital Aging Network will become part of my legacy. In addition, to teaching my grandchildren how to fish, how to find the Big Dipper in the night sky, and how to deal with the anxiety of swallowing a piece of gum. (My advice on that last is to stand on your head for one minute and then drink a glass of water.)

If you don't know where to start, checkout the VAN website or e-newsletter. Sign up for the ALVA class (this is where I started!). Check out RSVP or your community of faith. Bring a friend or come to meet a new ones.

Time is passing us by, another year will be gone before we know it. We tend to put off and procrastinate. It's never to late, but as the Nike ad says, "Just Do it".



Mark Skeie
Chair, VAN Leadership Group



Volunteering Spotlight

Can we help spread the word about a volunteer opportunity in your organization? Send us information by the 10th of the month for publication in the e-Bulletin for the next month. While we will make every effort to include what you send us, space is limited.

Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches *Mentor*

Are you looking for an exciting volunteer opportunity for personal growth? Mentor an ex-offender at the Hennepin County Correctional Facility to help him or her transition back into society successfully. Mentors must have one year off of paper if an ex-offender, or one year sober if chemically dependent. Mentors' commitment is four hours per month for one year. Trainings are September 26th and November 8th from 8:45 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the correctional facility. If interested, please contact Jennifer Edel of the Minneapolis Council of Churches at jedel@gmcc.org or at 612-721-8687 ex. 318.

Alzheimer's Association Minnesota/North Dakota *Information Helpline Assistants*

The Alzheimer's Association needs volunteers to provide information, resources, and support to those who call the Information Helpline with inquiries. A professional and/or an educational background related to Alzheimer's disease is helpful. Shifts are available during regular business hours. For further information, contact Debra Carlsen, at 952-857-0520 or by e-mail debra.carlsen@alz.org.

People Serving People *Activities Volunteer*

People Serving People is looking for activities volunteers to encourage early childhood participation in games and reading. People Serving People is a major provider of emergency housing assistance and support services in Hennepin County for children and families. Activities volunteers implement recreational activities for young children, interact with participants, and work one on one with children who need extra attention. Volunteer two to four hours per week



QUILT EXHIBIT *Alzheimer's: Forgetting Piece by Piece*

The [Alzheimer's Art Quilt Initiative \(AAQI\)](http://Alzheimer's Art Quilt Initiative (AAQI)) sponsors this exhibit of art quilts, the work of 54 quilt artists from 30 states, plus one artist from New Zealand. The artists, many internationally renowned, offer poignant interpretations of the Alzheimer's experience in fiber. AAQI has raised more than \$285,000 for Alzheimer's research through quilting. The exhibit travels throughout the U.S.

during evenings and weekends. For more information, contact Lindsey Tiede, Volunteer Coordinator, at lindseyt@peopleservingpeople.org.

DARTS *Administrative Assistants*

DARTS is seeking volunteers to be administrative assistants. DARTS provides transportation and supportive services to older adults and their families in Dakota County and beyond. Assistants help with data entry and short-term projects in research and marketing. Knowledge of Microsoft Excel is a plus. For more information, contact Barb Tiggemann at barb.tiggemann@darts1.org.

For Your CALENDAR



Tuesday, October 13, 2009
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM

OCTOBER VAN FORUM

Protecting Minnesota's Environment and Saving Dollars
*The Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment
 and Apple Valley's Green Initiatives*

Presenters:

Steve Morse, Executive Director,
 Minnesota Environmental
 Partnership

Mayor Mary Hamann-Roland,
 City of Apple Valley (Invited)

Free and Open to the Public

Hayes Community and Senior Center
14601 Hayes Rd.
Apple Valley, MN 55124

[Map to Hayes Community and Senior Center](#)

Note: As of June 2009, the Apple Valley Senior Center became part of the Hayes Community and Senior Center. The correct address is 14601.

OUTWARDLY, WISER, LIVELIER SENIORS (O.W.L.S),
 WEAVERS OF WEBS

Tuesday, September 8, 2009

The Dodge Nature Center offers [O.W.L.S.](#), a series of programs for seniors interested in learning more about the natural environment. O.W.L.S. occurs on the first Tuesday of the month from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. On Tuesday, September 8, older adults have the opportunity to learn about spiders and to discover the ways that they are amazing hunters, architects, and acrobats. Naturalist Monica Rauchwater is the presenter. Cost is \$3 for the program only or \$12 for the program and lunch. The center requires preregistration and payment. Call 651-455-4531 to register or for additional information.

SHAPE UP! A BOOT CAMP
 FOR THE 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE

September 10, 17, and 24 and October 1 and 8

The recent turmoil in our economy has left many people wondering about how to navigate the employment landscape. Employers of all kinds are saying they need adaptable, flexible employees with the ability to work collaboratively. This course will help workers of all kinds and ages learn how to think more

creatively and to solve problems—the kinds of skills that employers say they need to thrive in the rapidly changing, innovation-driven economy. Century College is offering the course. The instructor is Linda J. Camp, and the cost is \$195. To register or learn more, visit [Century College's website](#).

HOW CAN I AFFORD RETIREMENT—INVESTOR EDUCATION AT HENNEPIN COUNTY LIBRARY **September 24 through November 14**

If you are approaching retirement or are recently retired, plan to attend one or more investment-education sessions in the series. The library designed the program to help you learn how to make informed choices about financial investment of your retirement assets. The programs will:

- Provide objective, noncommercial information.
- Offer better ways to manage your retirement savings.
- Help you avoid misleading advice.

Learn about the investment process from financial experts and discover the resources available at Hennepin County Library. Sessions take place at

continued on page 7

For Your CALENDAR, continued

Central Library in downtown Minneapolis or at Ridgedale in Minnetonka. Register to attend one or all the seminars at www.hclib.org/affordretirement.

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION MEMORY WALK® AT HYLAND LAKE PARK RESERVE, BLOOMINGTON Saturday, September 26, 2009

The Memory Walk raises money to help those coping with Alzheimer's and related diseases. The event has raised more than \$260 million since 1989. Every dollar moves the world closer to being free of Alzheimer's. For information, visit the [Minnesota Memory Walk website](http://MinnesotaMemoryWalk.com).

MNCAAN'S ACTING FOR LIFE: A THEATRE WORKSHOP AND CONFERENCE FOR SENIORS October 9 and 10

Try out your acting skills and learn about exciting types of senior theatre such as reader's theatre, storytelling, old-time radio theatre, and improv acting. The event will encourage the development of theatre programs for seniors throughout Minnesota. Bonnie Vorenberg, founder and President of [ArtAge Senior Theatre Resource Center](http://ArtAgeSeniorTheatreResourceCenter.com), will lead this half-day workshop at the Guthrie. Registration on other details can be found at www.mncaan.net.

Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging

Dementia Care Transitions Project Receives National Innovations Award

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) recently awarded the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging (MAAA) an Aging Innovations Awards for its Dementia Care Transitions Project. The award recognizes programs creating innovative practices that the Aging Services Network can emulate.

The project is part of a six-year, demonstration initiative focusing on systems change that MAAA designed to increase detection, diagnosis, and care management of dementia. The program connects individuals with dementia to primary care for diagnostic assessments and to community resources for education and support. It is the only project in the nation working within hospitals to address the role of acute care for persons with dementia as well as their transition to primary care for follow-up assessment.

Living with dementia means depending heavily on family caregivers. Partners like the Alzheimer's

Association and Eldercare Partners provide critical nonmedical services such as care consultation and caregiver coaching.

The Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging began its work to support earlier detection of dementia in 2004. Its partners, HealthEast's St. Joseph's Hospital and North Memorial Medical Center, have screened more than 15,000 patients, with more than 25% of those people showing positive signs and symptoms of dementia. Both health systems have successfully embedded screening for memory loss in older patients into automated (electronic) admission assessments at all their acute-care sites.

MAAA hopes that the changes that its partners are developing and modeling will assure that people with Alzheimer's Disease and other types of dementia obtain the tools they need to cope successfully with the challenging demands of the disease.