



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

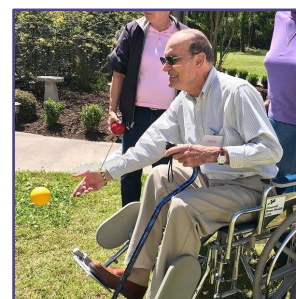
### Respite Care / Memory Care Day Program

#### **What is respite / memory care day program?**

Caring for someone with dementia (like Alzheimer's disease) is a tremendous responsibility that takes a toll on caregiver health and wellbeing. Respite is a brief break from direct-care responsibilities, giving caregivers time "off".

For 30 years, Respite Care Charleston (RCC) has offered respite care in the form of half-day social programs for those with dementia. Whether caregivers spend their time working, running errands, catching up with friends, or simply taking a nap, they can feel secure knowing their loved ones are safe and stimulated while in our care. RCC's respite programs are also great for members who benefit from socializing in a setting that's engaging and FUN!

For information on other RCC services, including support groups and one-on-one caregiver consultations, please visit [www.RespiteCareCharleston.org](http://www.RespiteCareCharleston.org) or call 843-647-7405.



#### **Who can participate in RCC's day programs?**

RCC's half-day memory care program is designed for individuals with dementia who can't be left alone without supervision or can only be alone for very short periods of time. Our members range from 48 to 102 years of age, from mild to late stage dementia. Since symptoms vary from one person to another, we interview caregivers before the first visit to learn about their loved ones and determine if we're able to serve their needs.

While we strive to serve everyone we can, RCC is not a medical program, so we can't offer nursing care, administer medications, or provide continuous one-on-one assistance. Our team is skilled at dealing with common dementia symptoms like wandering, confusion, anxiety, and other challenging or inappropriate behaviors. We can provide limited assistance with toileting, seat-to-standing transitions, walking, and other simple tasks. Please keep in mind, we can't give intensive focus to any one member for an extended period of time because of the safety risk that presents for others who need our attention too.

Respite Care Charleston provides services to those living with Alzheimer's disease and related forms of dementia without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any activities or operations. All program sites are handicap accessible. We are grateful for the generosity of churches who host our programs, however RCC is an independent organization with no religious affiliation.

## What types of activities are provided?

Each day is different, but there are a few key elements we always include in our programs: brain games, reminiscing, arts/music, light physical activity and nutritious meals. We post a daily schedule at each site so everyone knows what to expect, and we encourage you to use it to help talk with your loved one afterwards about what they did at program.

Our days typically start with coffee and conversation, when members spend time together socializing and working on jigsaw puzzles, word searches, coloring, sorting baseball cards, etc. Staff and volunteers guide conversations, assist those with greater needs, and make sure everyone is engaged as much as possible. Music is frequently a part of our programs and is an incredible tool for helping calm or energize the group, stimulate movement, and provide comfort.

Other common activities include:

- Reminiscing with storytelling, trivia, photos and Q&A's about shared experiences
- Bowling, cornhole, chair volleyball and other light movement activities
- Singing, dancing, and playing instruments with music therapists
- Arts and crafts like painting, making stained glass, and folding paper airplanes
- Visits by therapy pets, children and youth groups, musical performances, garden clubs, and other community groups



Members are encouraged to participate as much as they're able and willing, with staff and volunteers guiding them to help set or clear the lunch table, prepare meals, and distribute or collect materials for activities. Our goal is to personally connect with each member, meeting them "where they are" based on their functional levels and interests and adapting activities to their needs and capabilities. We often use seasons, holidays, historic events or members' interests and hobbies to create daily themes.

While our program coordinators have activities planned for each day, we're always flexible and happy to adapt to make sure everyone has a good time.

## Where and when are programs held?

RCC's social day programs are held from 10:00am to 1:45pm as follows:

- Johns Island – Mondays & Thursdays at St. John's Episcopal Church (3673 Maybank Hwy.)
- North Mt. Pleasant – Mondays & Wednesdays at All Saints Lutheran Church (2107 Highway 17)
- Mt. Pleasant – Tuesdays & Fridays at the Olive Branch AME Church (1734 North Highway 17)
- West Ashley – Mondays, Tuesdays & Thursdays at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church (3075 Bees Ferry Rd.)
- James Island – Tuesdays & Fridays at Martin Luther Church (1605 Harbor View Rd.)
- North Charleston – Wednesdays at New Francis Brown United Methodist Church (2517 Corona St.)

RCC also facilitates 12+ support groups each month, including groups which coincide with our day programs. The full schedule is online at: <http://respitewarecharleston.org/#support>.

To maintain a consistent routine for members and provide relief for caregivers when they need it most, we only close for a few holidays. When we have planned closures, we'll let you know as early as possible. When the weather's bad, we follow the safety / closure decisions of the Charleston County School District.

### **Is transportation available?**

We're not able to provide transportation to or from our programs at this time, but we're happy to work with you to identify safe alternatives and/or facilitate carpooling with other caregivers if appropriate.

### **How much does the program cost?**

We charge a flat fee of \$50 per visit – significantly less than the rate for other respite options. Fees include lunch and supplies. Monthly invoices are emailed to caregivers by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the following month and are due by the end of the month. Ex. Invoices for March program visits are emailed by April 5<sup>th</sup> and due by April 30<sup>th</sup>.

Caregivers who are 60 days or more past due on their program fee accounts must (A) pay in advance for respite sessions until their account balance is paid in full and (B) work with staff to determine a payment plan to bring their account to a zero balance within a maximum of 120 days.

(RCC's actual cost per program is ~\$70 per person. Donations, grants and fundraisers help us make up the difference, keeping fees affordable for those on fixed incomes.)

### **Is financial assistance available?**

Because we know how important respite is to both caregivers and their loved ones, we're determined no family should ever go without respite due to financial challenges. Last year, nearly 1 in 6 RCC members received a scholarship, and many more received caregiver grants from the Trident Area Agency on Aging. If you need help with program fees, simply contact us at 843.647.7405 to apply for a full or partial scholarship.

### **How often can / should we attend respite care?**

Some members come once or twice a week, others come all five days... We're glad to accommodate whatever works for your family.

Routine is great for people with dementia, so while we don't require a contract, we ask your family to come up with an attendance schedule and stick to it as much as possible. Please keep in mind:

- In the interest of safety and quality, our programs are limited to 12—14 members at most. While our program size changes from time to time, we sometimes have a waiting list, and no-shows can prevent someone else from being able to attend.
- We understand life with dementia requires flexibility, so once you've set your schedule, please let your program coordinator know ASAP if your loved one will be absent due to illness and provide as much notice as possible for planned absences.
- If you sometimes need a break outside your regular schedule, you're welcome to add extra days or go to one of our other program sites... just let us know as soon as you can so we can plan accordingly.
- Knowing how many people to expect each day helps us plan for the right amount of food and supplies to avoid waste and keep our fees low.



***\*\*First time program members are strongly encouraged to make a personal commitment to give the program a try for at least 3 visits.\*\**** Most members have a great time during their first visit, yet many say they don't want to come back after they leave and return to their normal "comfort zones" at home or with their caregivers. This is understandable considering the anxiety many people with dementia face, and fortunately, most newcomers adjust to the program after the four or five visits. While it's tough to push through this transition, the long-term benefits to both you and your loved one are worth it! We hope you'll trust our

team's professional experience and allow us to help you through any challenges associated with those first few visits. (If, after the first few visits, you decide the program or the time isn't right for your family, you'll still be welcome to try again in the future!)

### **Can I pay extra for my loved one to come early or stay late?**

Unfortunately, our programs hours are strictly limited due to state licensing requirements. Members cannot arrive before 10:00am or stay after 1:45pm.

### **Can I stay with my loved one during the program?**

While it might seem your loved one would be more comfortable if you stay with them, it's usually best to leave within a few minutes of arrival. In most cases, if you're present, your loved one won't engage with others as much as they might otherwise, and many will instead "cling" to the person they're most familiar with. Once you leave, they'll probably be anxious at first, but we're really good at distracting, redirecting and comforting. Members are almost always fine after a few minutes, but if your loved one is really inconsolable, we won't hesitate to contact you.

If you'd like to learn more about the program, you're welcome to schedule a visit to any of our sites to get a firsthand look at what we're all about. You can also visit our Facebook or Instagram pages for pictures and videos of RCC in action or speak to our staff for details about the site(s) that interests you most.

### **What safety measures are in place?**

- Each program site is staffed by RCC employees who have cleared background checks, are trained in CPR and first aid, and have training and experience working with those with dementia.
- Members are never alone one-on-one with anyone but staff. Volunteers do not assist with toileting.
- Exits are closely monitored to reduce the risk of wandering.
- Activities are gentle, optional and adaptable to those with physical challenges.
- To minimize the risk of disease, program members, staff, volunteers and all others who interact with program members are strongly encouraged to follow their physician's recommendations regarding vaccinations, including but not limited to: Covid, flu, RSV, pneumonia and/or shingles.

In addition to keeping your loved one safe, RCC is committed to treating everyone with respect and dignity. Some of the basic rules we live by are:

- Treat adults as adults. Never speak down to or infantilize someone due to cognitive impairment.
- Keep the tone and atmosphere calm and positive.
- Recognize challenging behaviors as symptoms and use distraction and redirection to change the situation. A person with dementia isn't *being* difficult, they're having a difficult time.
- Adjust our expectations and actions to what members need to feel safe and comfortable.
- Avoid using the word "no," arguing or trying to convince members they're wrong.
- Recognize and validate members' feelings and emotions.
- Offer simple choices and encourage independence and autonomy.
- Carefully choose words and phrases to avoid causing anxiety for someone who feels they should remember but can't.
- Be patient when someone is experiencing aphasia, giving them the chance to express themselves as best they can.
- Focus on what someone CAN do and maximize that. Don't point out what may be difficult or beyond their current capabilities.
- Always maintain a sense of humor!



### **Can I bring my loved one late / leave early?**

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, we ask members to stay for the full program. When someone leaves early, it creates confusion and anxiety for others who think it's time for them to leave too. Program fees are flat and can't be pro-rated.



### **What if my loved one doesn't want to come?**

It's common for people to be reluctant to attend – particularly those in the earlier stages of dementia or who have misconceptions about our programs. If you're not sure your loved one will be interested, we can work with you to develop a plan to build buy-in and ease nerves.

Depending on their personality and interests, there are several tips, tricks, and “therapeutic lies” we can suggest that can make your loved one more willing to attend. For those who are nervous, we'll use information from the pre-visit interview to help them feel personally welcomed (ex. introducing them to someone with shared interests, planning activities around things they enjoy, playing songs by their favorite artists or serving their favorite dessert.)

For individuals in the earlier stages of dementia, some find it helpful to look at our program as a volunteer assignment, part-time job, memory class or seniors club – enabling them to see themselves differently from members with more advanced symptoms. We can reinforce this by recognizing members as “volunteers” and assigning tasks that align with their interests / skills, providing fake offer letters or paychecks for their “job,” or adding their “performance” to our schedule for the day.

### **How do I get started?**

New member enrollment is fairly simple and begins with an informal interview about your loved one. Once we've determined if we're able to meet their needs, you'll be asked to complete a brief assessment to let us know more about their background / history and an enrollment agreement to make sure we're on the same page regarding expectations. (Detailed information on the assessment is particularly valuable for ensuring a smooth transition into the program.) If all goes as planned, we should be able to schedule your first visit as soon as you're ready – sometimes as soon as the following day if needed!

To get started, contact us phone at 843-647-7405 or via e-mail at [Info@RespiteCareCharleston.org](mailto:Info@RespiteCareCharleston.org).