

Garden Bridge—A Path To Renewal

By Elizabeth L. Lugo

Families who have begun to face the challenge of living with cognitive disorders face challenges most of us cannot understand.

The person with Alzheimer's, vascular dementia, or any of the many other forms of cognitive loss must come to terms with the loss of memory, loss of connection with past life, and sometimes face the loss of friends and even family. Friends and family are oftentimes unable or unwilling to maintain contact because of misunderstanding of, fear of, or lack of patience with coping with the effects of the disorder. The person experiencing these losses often has feelings of anger, guilt, grief, depression, and fear, and may even have suicidal thoughts.

When faced with the realities of cognitive failure in a loved one, even the most capable family caregiver may experience feelings of loss, grief, denial, helplessness, and even resentment and anger. At the same time, the caregiver struggles with finding help. From the professionals who understand the issues surrounding cognitive failure, to programs that help address care issues; simply finding someone who understands and can help has been one of the greatest challenges to be faced.

The person experiencing cognitive failure is encouraged to continue to participate in normal activities that he or she has enjoyed in the past, while also engaging in activities in the Volen Center's active senior program. These programs range from social activities, to day trips and special events that include individuals of all ages and interests. Each Garden Bridge participant also undergoes special memory training and exercises, conducted by skilled professionals on staff at the Volen Center. Every Bridge participant is given individualized attention and assisted by specially trained volunteers and staff, who guide them as necessary through the day.

The Garden Bridge Program provides a new alternative for individuals in the very early stages of cognitive problems and their family caregivers, offering real options for support, education, and referral.

Whether a person is a caregiver or someone experiencing cognitive loss, each individual is given the opportunity to continue to function as normally as possible while receiving the assistance that they need



to adjust to a new way of living. The Garden Bridge Program gives families dealing with early cognitive failure a second chance at experiencing the joy of life, while preparing for the days to come.

Elizabeth L. Lugo is President/CEO of the Volen Center.

The Volen Center's Garden Bridge operates Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. For more information on the programs and services that Garden Bridge has to offer, please call us at 561.395.8920, ext. 272 and arrange for a Center tour or contact Jared Policano by email: policanoj@volencenter.com.

Listen to Alice Smith, Programs Assistant and Laura Panizza, Director of Adult Day Care with Anita Finley on Saturday, February 25 from 4:30-5:00 PM on WWNN 1470AM and on the Internet at www.wwnnradio.com.