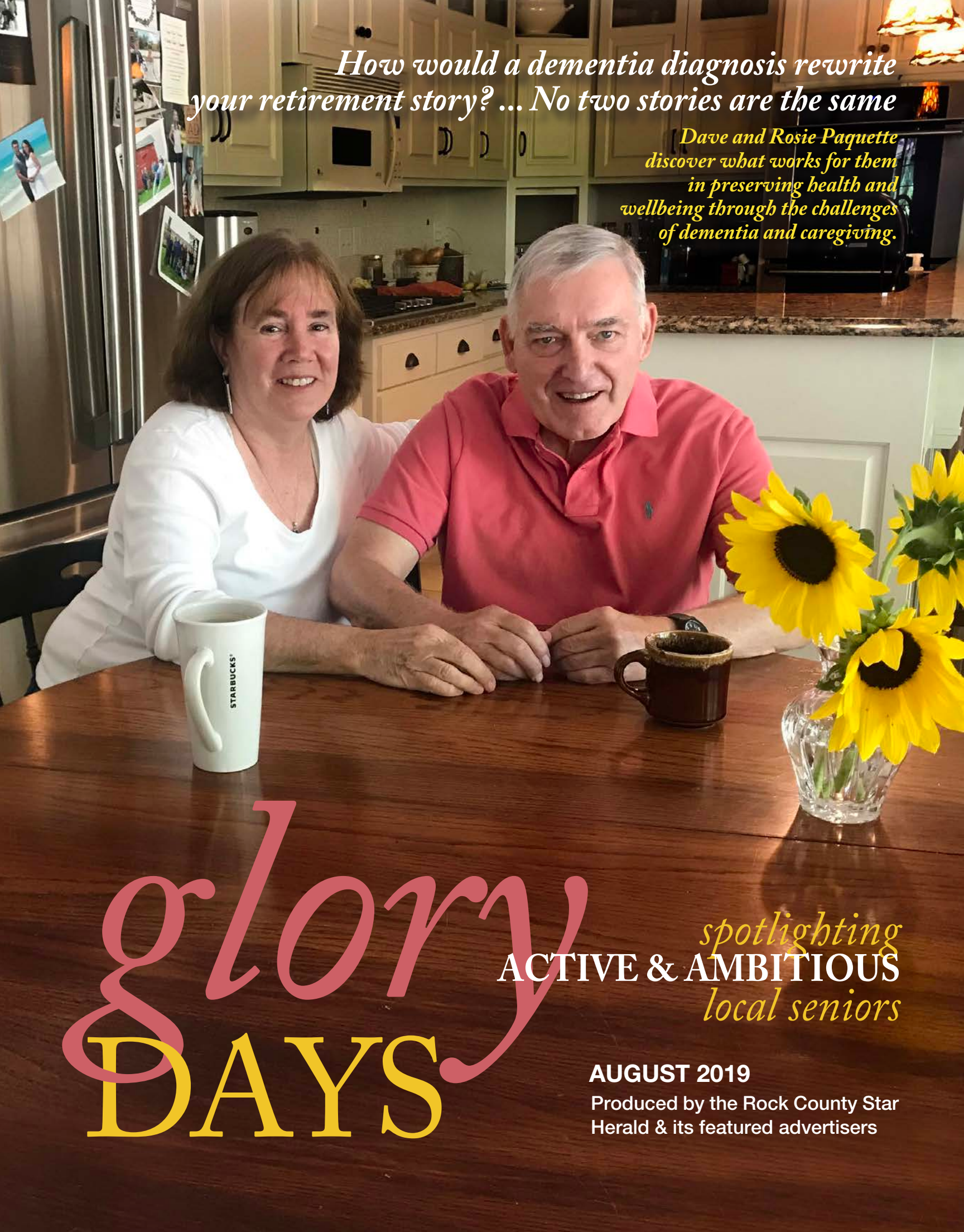


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Dave and Rosie Paquette discover what works for them in preserving health and wellbeing through the challenges of dementia and caregiving.



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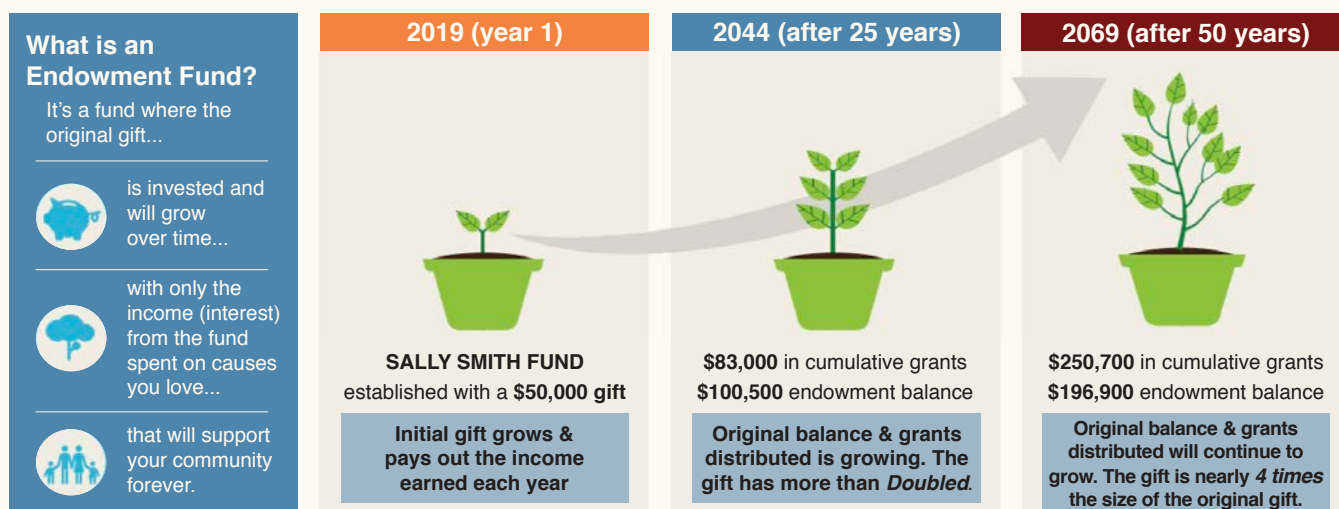
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CONTENTS

7

How would dementia rewrite your retirement?

Dave and Rosie Paquette share their story about the challenges of living with a dementia.

13

Five generations of funeral planning

Jordan Dingmann earned his degree and joined the 115-year-old family business of funeral planning.

18

What's in a name?

Plenty, especially if it's 'Gloria.' The local Glorias gathered for a second annual party on Aug. 1 in Luverne.

21

Keeping it in the family

Ninety-one-year-old Rock County resident Norman Wessels restores a 47-year-old tractor that's been in the family for decades.

24

Rock County Dementia Network

A team of health professionals, caregivers and volunteers are working on community resources for local families.



Randy Hartquist
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Faces of dementia

Many local families are affected by dementia, but no two cases are the same, and support is hard to come by. Dave and Rosie Paquette are sharing their story and hoping to help others



For Rosie and Dave Paquette, a healthy perspective and a little humor help them navigate the challenges of a Parkinson's disease and Lewy body dementia diagnosis that is rewriting their life chapter of retirement.

When Dave Paquette sold his longtime Luverne dental practice in 2016, he and Rosie looked forward to retirement years doing what they enjoyed and having free time to do it.

Dave, a pilot, looked forward to flying his restored 1947 Aeronca L-16A Champ Airplane and spending more time outdoors hunting and jogging.

For Rosie, selling the dental business was a chance to exhale and to take that trip to Europe they had talked about for so long.

And generally she looked forward to free time for themselves, particularly after they had cared for her mother several months in their home before she passed away.

"We were feeling pretty good about things, especially after the eye clinic bought the dental building and expanded," Rosie said.

"When you invest so much into a business, it's nice to see someone take it over and put care into it."

As fate would have it, Dave was diagnosed only a year later with Parkinson's disease and they began rethinking their future.

'I couldn't go another step'

He had been doctoring with some recent back pain that he attributed to years of leaning over patients.

But then there was the episode on a treadmill.

He used to run a 5K every noon hour, but one day he ran a mile and stopped.

"I couldn't go another step," he said. "I was so tired I could hardly get off the treadmill."

It was a day he won't forget.

"That was it," he said. "I haven't been able to run since then."

"I couldn't go another step. I was so tired I could hardly get off the treadmill. That was it ... I haven't been able to run since then."

— Dave Paquette, Luverne, reflecting on early Parkinson's symptoms

While the lapse was unnerving, he and Rosie proceeded with their travel plans to Europe in 2016.

Dave had lived in Heidelberg for five years as a child when his dad worked for the Department of Defense.

"He always said he'd like to go back just once," Rosie said.

But when the plane landed in London, Dave couldn't get out of his seat.

"I don't know what happened," he said. "I couldn't walk; it hurt so bad."

He spent the next 14 days in a wheelchair with Rosie pushing from behind, sometimes over cobblestones in historic districts. "I was very seriously considering going home," she said.

When they returned home, an MRI and CT scan provided no clear answers, but the spells of weakness and pain persisted.

Then, in the winter of 2017, things began to unravel.

Photos and text
by Lori Sorenson

... continued on page 6



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Dave restored a 1947 Aeronca L-16A Champ Airplane years ago and used to fly it regularly out of the Luverne airport. His Parkinson's and dementia diagnosis has prevented him from enjoying this beloved pastime, but his son, Denis, recently took him up for a flight — Dave's first time up in over six years.



tia was part of his Parkinson's diagnosis, which explained a lot, but opened the door to a whole new world of unknowns.

'Whole new world of unknowns'

"There are no two Parkinson's patients the same, and what works for one might not work for another," Dave said. "I have the kind with Lewy bodies."

Lewy body dementia causes a progressive decline in mental ability and visual hallucinations and changes in alertness and attention.

Parkinson's with Lewy bodies also causes rigid muscles,

Midwinter intruder

In addition to bouts of immobility, Dave began hallucinating.

"He'd say to me, 'Don't you see that man sitting over there in that chair?' And I'd tell him 'no,' and then I'd go over and sit in the chair, to show him," Rosie said.

But they got worse, especially at night.

One subzero winter night, Dave saw an intruder with a gun enter the house, and at 1 a.m. he ran outside wearing only his underwear to flee from the shooter.

Forty-five minutes later Rosie woke to a phone call from Karen Radisewitz.

Dave had turned up on their backyard second-floor patio shivering and panicked.

"He wanted to warn them they were in danger," Rosie said.

An emergency room visit turned into a two-week hospital stay to mend his badly frostbitten feet.

"They had blistered so badly, it was down to raw skin; the soles were completely sloughed off," Rosie said, adding that she now deadbolts the doors at night and hides the key. "I was afraid he'd get an infection and lose part of his feet."

The Paquettes said they were grateful for their friend, Dr. Richard Morgan, who treated him in Luverne while consulting with St. Paul burn unit physicians.

Eventually Dave's symptoms led doctors to believe Lewy body demen-

slow movement and tremors — other symptoms that fit Dave's experiences.

The muscles in the front of his neck are contracting, causing his stooped-over posture.

Rosie occasionally puts a hand on his back and on his chest to straighten him. They laugh about it, and he's straight for a few moments, but then his head lowers back to his chest.

Targeted physical therapy is helping to relieve rigid muscles and weakness, and a new medication may also provide relief. But poor posture was the least of their concerns.

In the months that followed, medications helped with the hallucinations, but there were disappointing side effects.

And the disease slowly chipped away at their freedoms. "It's life-changing," Rosie said.

"Especially in the winter when it's harder to get out."

'He can tell you how to assemble an airplane, but he can't get into bed'

When she wasn't working, Rosie was with Dave, and some days it was tough to get away at all.

"We have good days and bad days," she said on Aug. 9.

"Today's a good day; he walked to coffee at Pizza Ranch.

But there are some days I can't leave him alone for more than 10 minutes. ... and you don't know when those good days or bad days are going to be."

On a bad day he's physically disabled.

"Turning, sitting and standing can be hard," Rosie said. "He can walk straight forward for a mile, but sometimes he can't get himself to bed."

... continued on page 20

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Five generations of care

Jordan Dingmann joins business of helping families part with their loved ones

Jordan Dingmann (right) joins father, Dan Dingmann, and grandfather, Doug Dingmann of Sauk Rapids (left), in the 115-year-old family business. They're pictured at the Methodist Church in Luverne with Lady and Beauty, the horses that pull the funeral carriage.

Written by
Jason Berghorst



Dingmann Funeral Home and Cremation Service welcomes fifth generation mortician to 115-year-old business



Jordan graduated from Adrian High School in 2014, and continued his education at St. Cloud Technical College before transferring to the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, where he earned his mortuary science degree this spring.

(Submitted photo)

Dingmann Funeral Home and Cremation Service has reached a milestone after 115 years in business.

In July Jordan Dingmann joined the family business as a fifth generation funeral director.

"I honestly never thought of doing anything else," he said.

Jordan, 24, graduated from the University of Minnesota in May and will work at the Dingmann Funeral Homes in Luverne, Adrian and Worthington.

Jordan joins his dad, Dan Dingmann, and Kurt Haugen as funeral directors at the Luverne location.

"It's exciting to work with my son while serving families," Dan said. "I was fortunate to do the same with my father."

Dan's father, Doug Dingmann of Sauk Rapids, is the third generation in the line of funeral directors.

Three of Doug's four children and four of his grandchildren are funeral directors or planning to join the profession.

"I'm proud of them,"

Doug said, "It means a lot that they showed an interest."

"I honestly never thought of doing anything else."

— Jordan Dingmann

Farm implements and funerals

John Dingmann, Doug's grandfather, began providing funeral services while also selling hardware and farm implements from his business in Clear Lake, Minnesota, in about 1904.

... continued on page 10



During high school, Jordan Dingmann began to work with the Dingmanns' team of horses, Lady and Beauty, that pull the funeral carriage at some services and parades. At that time the horses were near St. Cloud. Now that Jordan lives in Adrian, the horses are housed on a friend's acreage north of Luverne. "I love riding and working with the horses," he said. "We had a colt born in May and hope to have another one next year for a new generation of the team."



loss or preparing for one," he said. "I look forward to serving people in the same way."

After graduating from AHS in 2014, Jordan continued his education at St. Cloud Technical College before transferring to the U of M. He gained experience working in four different funeral homes during his training, but always knew he wanted to return to and work in southwestern Minnesota.

'You can't do that in the Cities'

"I just really enjoy the small town atmosphere and knowing most of the people in the community," Jordan said.

The rural lifestyle is ideal for Jordan for a number of reasons.

During high school, he began to work with the Dingmanns' team of horses, Lady and Beauty, that pull the funeral carriage at some services and parades.

At that time the horses were near St. Cloud. Now that Jordan lives in Adrian, the horses are housed on a friend's acreage north of Luverne.

John had 11 sons, four of whom went into the funeral business. One of those, Francis "Frunce" Dingmann, was Doug's father.

Frunce provided funeral services while selling hardware and International Harvester equipment in Kimball.

Unlike many in his family, Doug didn't always plan to be a funeral director.

"I worked at Woolworth's and then the Ford Plant in St. Paul before deciding to go to the University for mortuary science in my late 20s," Doug said.

Doug attended the University of Minnesota and became licensed in 1970 and worked at a funeral home in Sauk Rapids before purchasing the business in 1974.

No sleepovers or trick-or-treaters

Doug and his wife, Karen, lived in the funeral home while raising their four children.

Dan remembers when he realized his childhood home was unique.

"I thought everybody had bodies in the basement and caskets in the garage," Dan joked.

"It wasn't until grade school that I learned why we never had sleepovers and nobody came to our door on Halloween."

At the same time, Dan says he realized that his dad's job was special.

"I went to Catholic school and we'd often get out of school to serve at funeral masses," he said. "That's how I learned what my dad really did and how important it was to people."

Dan said seeing the funeral business up close encouraged him to follow in his father's footsteps and graduate from the U of M with a mortuary science degree.

In 1993 Dan and his wife, Monica, moved to Luverne to begin his career at the Holm Funeral Home, which they later purchased.

In 1996 the Dingmann family purchased the Lynch Funeral Homes in Adrian, Worthington and Wilmont.

Dan and Monica raised their four children, all graduates of Adrian High School, in a funeral home as well.

Front row seat to funeral business

Just like his dad and grandfather before him, Jordan says he learned a lot about being a funeral director from a young age.

"Growing up I had a front row seat to the funeral business," Jordan said.

"I saw the commitment that my dad had and how he had to be available at the drop of a hat," he said.

Jordan remembers a time when the family turned around on their way to Wisconsin Dells because of a funeral call.

"We kids were devastated, but Mom explained to us why we needed to come home and what my parents were trying to build. I still remember that," Jordan said.

"I also got to see how empathetic my dad was with people I know from the community when they are going through a

... continued on page 12

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Paul Larson, Dan Dingmann,
Monica Dingmann, Kurt Haugen,
Jordan Dingmann

"I was fortunate to learn from my dad and now I'm looking forward to (eventually) passing the business on to the next generation. It's just a part of our family and has been since 1904."

*— Dan Dingmann,
Jordan's father*



Harper, a golden doodle puppy, will be trained as a grief support dog to work at Dingmann Funeral Home.

"I love riding and working with the horses," he said. "We had a colt born in May and hope to have another one next year for a new generation of the team. ... The horses are kind of my thing around here."

Jordan also enjoys living where he can enjoy his hobbies of hunting, fishing and snowmobiling.

"You can't do that in the Cities," he joked.

Next generation of funeral services

As a new generation joins the business, the funeral industry continues to evolve.

"One huge change is the number of women in the profession," Jordan said. "My dad said his class had only four women graduates. My class was about 50/50."

An increase in families choosing cremation is another change.

"When I started, you had to go to Minneapolis to find a crematorium," Doug said. "Now about half of our services end with cremation as the final deposition."

Jordan plans to bring another new trend in the funeral industry to the family business soon.

Harper, a golden doodle puppy, was recently purchased and will be trained as a grief support dog.

Jordan said he hopes the dog will be in service within about six months.

"She'll live with me and come to work every day," he said.

"People just love it. Grief support dogs can really help calm people and make them more comfortable during arrangements."

Jordan pointed out the options during the arrangements process, and the types of services offered continue to evolve.

"We really encourage people to take the opportunity to do some pre-arranging," he said.

"It's so helpful for the surviving family members to have those details and wishes known."

A family vocation

Doug, Dan and Jordan all describe a sense of pride in their positions within the five generations.

"Growing up I had a front row seat to the funeral business. I saw the commitment that my dad had and how he had to be available at the drop of a hat. ... I also got to see how empathetic my dad was with people I know from the community when they are going through a loss or preparing for one. I look forward to serving people in the same way."

*— Jordan Dingmann,
fifth generation mortician with Dingmann
Funeral Home and Cremation Service*

"I'm very fortunate to have family follow in this vocation," Doug said. "It means a lot."

In addition to Luverne, Adrian and Worthington, the family now operates ten other funeral homes in central and northern Minnesota.

Jordan said he's not only looking forward to working with his dad, but also the rest of the staff.

"I'm excited to work with Kurt and the rest of our staff," he said. "We have great people here."

Dan expressed his pride in passing the legacy of serving families to a fifth generation.

"I was fortunate to learn from my dad and now I'm looking forward to (eventually) passing the business on to the next generation," Dan said.

Dan's youngest son, Skylar, is beginning college this fall and also plans to major in mortuary science.

"It's just a part of our family," he said, "and has been since 1904."

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Family workhorse still chugging ... 33 years later

1972 Montgomery Ward lawn tractor still running in the Wessels family

Photos and
text by Mavis
Fodness



After months of restoration, the 1972 Montgomery Ward lawn tractor purchased by Norm (pictured above) and Joyce Wessels is operational.

At age 91, Norm Wessels still doesn't back away from challenges. For decades he worked solving various equipment tasks for A.R. Wood and Luverne Truck Equipment.

Another challenge presented itself last spring when Wessels decided to restore a 1972 Montgomery Ward's lawn tractor.

"The only thing I ever overhauled was a lawn mower," he said.

The 16-hp tractor had spent the last 33 years at the family cabin near Lake Shetek. The last couple of years, however, the tractor was parked behind his late son, Mike's, tool shed.

"He said 'It doesn't run,'" Wessels said.

The lawn tractor has served the Wessels family well since its purchase in 1973.

Not only was the mail order catalog machine used for mowing; it also helped remove snow, back the dock into the water and assist the family with various odd jobs around the house.

The lawn tractor was used so much that it had become an intricate part of the Wessels family, the only owners of the unique lawn tractor.

"It's bigger than what they make now," Wessels said.

Wessels first saw the 1972 beige- and orange-colored lawn tractor in the Montgomery Ward employees catalog. The Gilson Model 33185 featured a two-speed hydrostatic transmission with under mount mower and front snow blower attachments.

The catalog was a perk of store managers, a position Norm's wife, Joyce, held in Luverne for 24 years.

Norm estimated the employee discount brought the lawn tractor's \$6,000 retail price to at least half price.

In 1973 the Wessels lived on North Highway 75, adjacent to the American Reformed Church property. Norm would use the lawn tractor to mow his lawn at the corner of 75 and James Street and later

the empty lot between his home and the church.

When Norm and Joyce retired, they spent 19 years living in Texas. By then the lawn tractor was used primarily at the cabin on Lake Shetek, where it continued to do a variety of jobs, including help level an old building.

"I hooked up the lawn mower and pulled the roof off," Norm said.

Son Mike eventually took over ownership. When he battled cancer last year, he left Lake Shetek to live with Norm in Luverne.

The year before that, Joyce became a resident in the Good Samaritan Society — Mary Jane Brown Home in Luverne.

Norm noticed the lawn tractor behind the lake shed as he helped Mike move to Luverne.

He decided he would restore the lawn tractor.

"I was sitting here doing nothing, talking to myself," Norm said. "I decided to do something while talking to myself."

Mike and Norm tinkered with the motor, and after making the necessary adjustments with the help of Norm's brother Lowell, the two-stroke engine was back to working order.



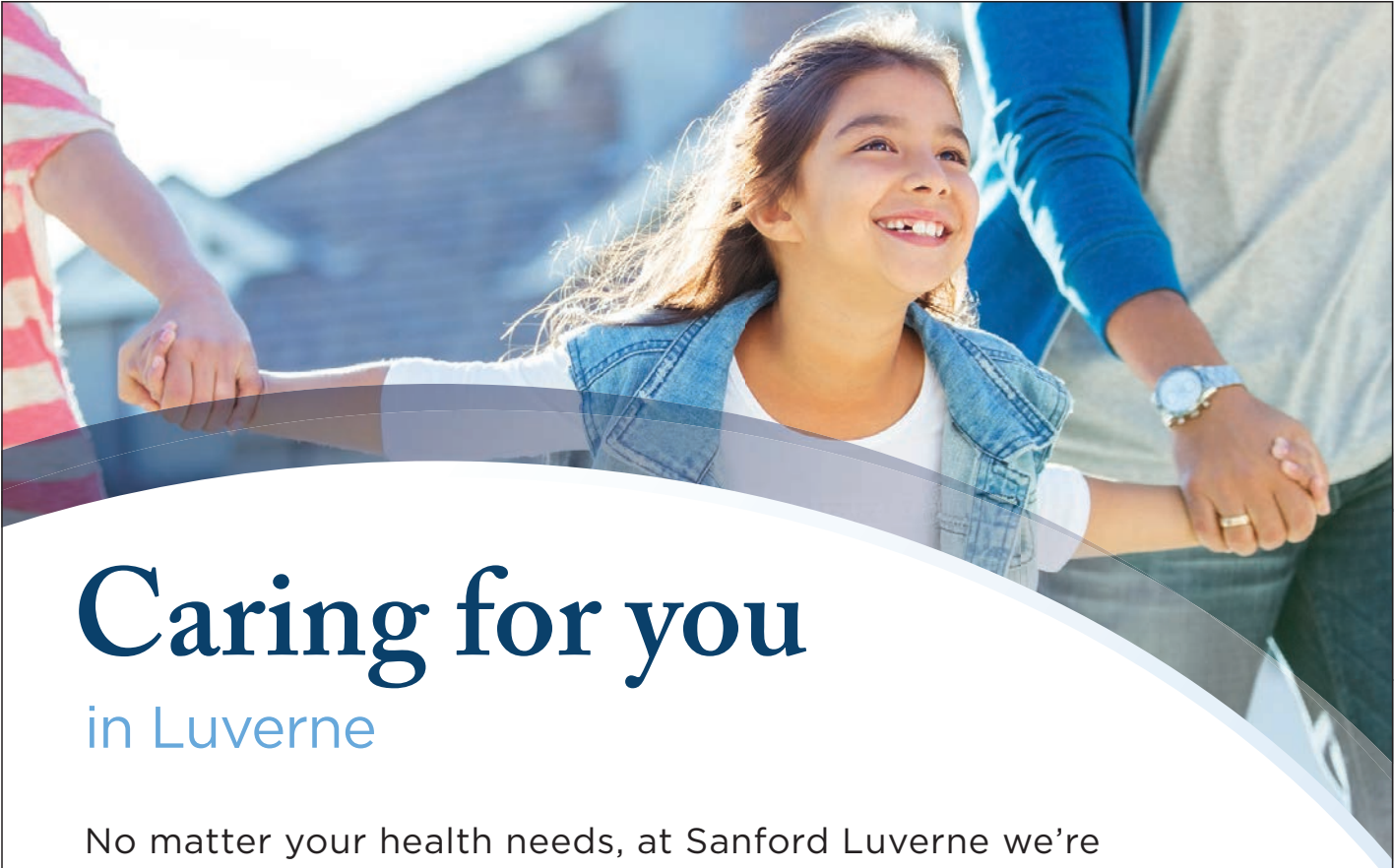
Many of the original decals still adhere to Norm Wessels's 1972 Montgomery Ward lawn tractor even after it received a coat of blue Ford tractor paint.

Rust was removed from the lawn tractor and painted white and blue, the colors of a 1976 Ford tractor. The original tan and orange colors couldn't be found.

With its motor now functioning, the lawn tractor will be used in Rock Rapids, Iowa, by son Mark.

The restoration was a family project, and keeping the 47-year old tractor in the family was a priority.

"That's why it's a sentimental little project," said daughter Linda Schoon. "There are a lot of good memories in that tractor."



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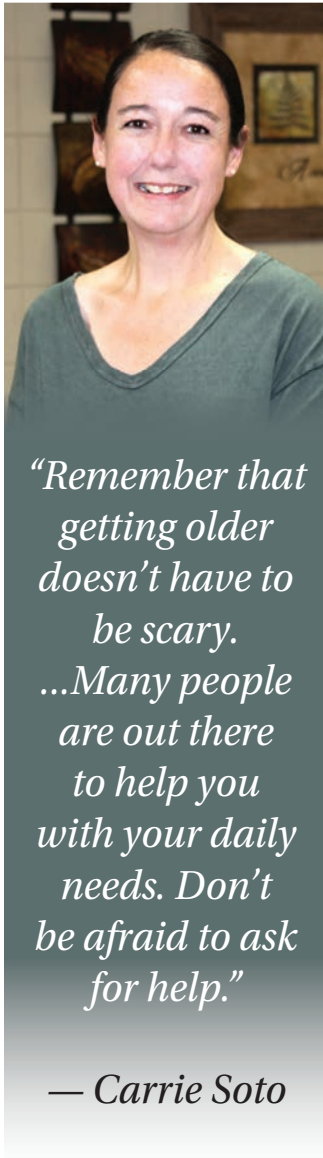
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Compassion has its rewards

Carrie Soto, Luverne, is the 2018 Care Providers of Minnesota Senior Living Manager of the Year



"Remember that getting older doesn't have to be scary. ...Many people are out there to help you with your daily needs. Don't be afraid to ask for help."

— Carrie Soto

Five years after starting her career at the Good Samaritan Society in Luverne, Senior Housing Manager Carrie Soto continues to make an impact serving Minnesota seniors.

Carrie believes her compassion for the tenants and their families has led her to administer outstanding care by providing a true sense of belonging and trust.

"I love getting that phone call from a family who is in need," says Carrie. "There are so many options for them and I enjoy being a resource. It's incredible."

Carrie started in long-term care during high school when she worked at a senior center in Madison, South Dakota, where she served breakfast to residents every morning before school.

She became a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and left to explore other opportunities, before returning to senior care in 2013 as director of resource development at the Good Samaritan Society in Luverne.

Along the way she earned her master's degree in business administration from the University of Sioux Falls, and in 2016 Carrie was offered the

job and has been working in the management role for the past three years.

"I love it and I look out my door every day and just think how wonderful it is to work in an environment where we really get to make an impact on people's lives," says Carrie.

Carrie helps families navigate the many options that are available when searching for the right senior housing.

"I do a lot of social work," Carrie said. "I love seeing a change in a resident's well-being and their families being happy if they do come to one of our buildings."

Carrie said she understands how for some families there's a certain sense of loss when a senior loved one turns to a senior care center for support.

There can be a stigma that somehow the family or the senior family member failed because they could no longer manage everything on their own.

That's why she tries to remind families that moving into senior care is more about gaining than losing.

"Your life does not come to a halt," she said. "With the extra support and services, I say you get to live carefree."

Carrie's honest approach toward caring for Minnesota

seniors and their families won her 2018 Care Providers of Minnesota Senior Living Manager of the Year Award.

"I truly share the award with the staff that I work with," Carrie said. "They work so hard and try to provide a really great quality of life for our tenants."

Over the years, Carrie said she continues to marvel at the devotion of volunteers who lend their hand to assist senior caregivers and staff.

Carrie emphasized that volunteers have the ability to provide a connection with senior residents that can have a tremendous impact on their daily lives.

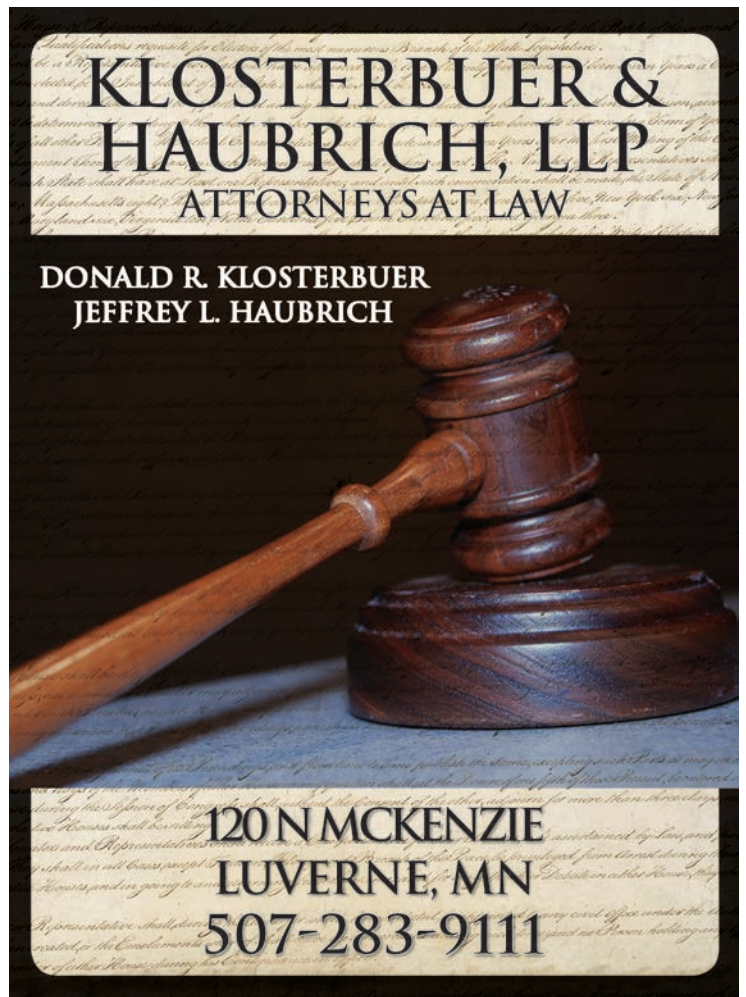
"These deep relationships you form with people in long-term care are unlike any other field," Carrie said.

"I remember getting a happy birthday message from a family member that read, 'Today you were somebody's hero.' It brought tears to my eyes."

If there's one takeaway from Carrie's professional journey so far, she said Minnesota seniors must never forget that they are loved and not alone.

"Remember that getting older doesn't have to be scary," Carrie said. "Many people are out there to help you with your daily needs. Don't be afraid to ask for help."

This article by Aaron Roundtree is reprinted with permission by Face Aging MN, which originally shared the story on its website in January.



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Glorias gather for second annual party

Seven Glorias gathered at the Camelot Apartments community room Aug. 1 in Luverne to celebrate their shared name. They are (clockwise from left) Gloria Hibma, Gloria Rust, Gloria Boelman, Gloria Aanenson, Gloria Rolfs, Gloria Kashner and Gloria Kassel (who drove the longest distance from Dawson, Minnesota).

Photos and text
by Lori Sorenson



A roomful of Glorias gathered around the Camelot Apartments dining room table Aug. 1

Introductions were hardly necessary. "Hi, my name is Gloria" pretty well summed it up.

Many of the guests had already met; some were meeting for the first time. All shared one thing in common — their name.

Gloria Aanenson orchestrated the event, the second one following last year's successful party.

Joining her were Gloria Hibma, Gloria Rust, Gloria Boelman, Gloria Rolfs, Gloria Kashner and Gloria Kassel, seven in all. They each had received a paper invitation showing a stamped capital G with a butterfly perched on top.



Guests brought food items and shared their recipes. This resulted in delicacies like rosettes, frosted baby carrot cakes, calico salsa, cream puffs and more — all displayed on a hand-quilted, butterfly-themed table runner.



Hostess Gloria set a cheerful butterfly-themed table with lavender-colored placemats and matching folded place cards — each bearing the same name, which means, "Glory, glorious one."

Each name card was artfully embellished with a three-dimensional sparkly yellow butterfly.

Like last year's Gloria party table, this year's spread carried Aanenson's personal touches — a hand-sewn butterfly fabric table runner, handmade beverage coasters, and nut cups made from yogurt jars decorated with white morning glories, lavender-colored butterflies and tiny yellow star buttons.

At last year's party the Glorias were encouraged to bring personal craft items to display and discuss. This year they

were encouraged to bring food items and share their recipes.

This resulted in delicacies like rosettes, frosted baby carrot cakes, calico salsa, cream puffs and more — all displayed on a hand-quilted butterfly-themed table runner.

"It was a really nice time, and this year the girls stayed longer," Aanenson said. "It was really interesting to listen to each one of them talk about what has gone on in their lives in the past year."

In addition to the nut cups, guests were sent home with fabric travel tissue cases and paper sculptures with butterfly-shaped pages that told a story of faith, "God Speaking."

Aanenson said she's already looking forward to next year's Gloria party and thinking of ideas for a new theme.

"I just love it; it's something I've always wanted to do ... I've always known there were a lot of Glorias around, and I was always too busy doing other things," said Aanenson, 88.

"Now I have time."

She provided her phone number — 507-283-2801 — should other Glorias wish to be invited to the next gathering.



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Faces of Dementia
... from page 6

Sometimes she'll enter the kitchen and find him stooped over the counter — locked in

that position. "The term they use for this is 'freezing,'" Rosie said.

"I'll go over to him and give him a nudge, and that's all it takes to get him moving."

She likens his brain to Swiss cheese. "This little hole is punched out and that little piece is missing ..." she said.

"He can tell you how to assemble an airplane, but he can't get into bed ... he'll crawl on his hands and knees, and I'll have to tell him to stand up, turn around and sit down."

Also, he'll walk two miles on a treadmill in therapy, and when it's time to quit, he doesn't know how to get off the machine. "He can't figure out how to take a side step," Rosie said.

'I'm a patient person, but this really tested me'

Rosie continued working 20 hours a week as a surgical nurse in Sioux Falls, but she found it increasingly difficult to leave Dave home alone.

"A year and a half ago when things were horrible, I didn't know where to turn for help," she said.

"I didn't want to ask our kids, because they are busy and have kids of their own, and they were already dealing with the fact that this was happening to their dad."

Frustration boiled over one day when she left the house for a quick errand.

"I ran to get groceries, and I called him before I got gas," Rosie said. "He said everything was OK, but when I got home, the dog [who just had surgery] had bled all over the house. There was blood everywhere — on the walls, the floor, the Oriental rug. ... It looked like a murder scene."

Rosie said she lost it.

"I couldn't understand how he could just let the dog walk around like that bleeding," she said. "I completely lost my marbles."

And later she felt guilty that she lost her temper. "I'm a patient person, but this really tested me," Rosie said.

"I'm a nurse, and I found myself blowing my top at this person I love ... who is sick."

At that point she knew she needed help, and she researched local agencies, which offered respite care for her to leave home an hour or two at a time.

*"I completely lost my marbles.
... I'm a patient person, but this
really tested me. I'm a nurse, and I
found myself blowing my top at this
person I love ... who is sick."*

*— Rosie Paquette, Luverne
spouse and caregiver*

*"He can tell you how to assemble an airplane,
but he can't get into bed ... he'll crawl on his
hands and knees, and I'll have to tell him to
stand up, turn around and sit down. ... I joke
that his brain is like Swiss cheese; this little hole
is punched out and that little piece is missing."*

— Rosie Paquette, wife and caregiver



Dave has good days and bad days. On a recent good day, his son, Denis, also a pilot, took him up for a flight over Luverne and the Blue Mounds State Park in a 1947 Aeronca L-16A Champ Airplane that Dave restored years ago. He used to fly the plane regularly out of the Luverne airport, but the recent flight was his first in over six years.

"But caregivers also need some real time — like an afternoon or full day — to decompress," Rosie said. "For me, being alone in my own home helps me recharge."

Finding what works

Eventually, through a friend of a friend, the Paquettes hired a young woman in Luverne to spend time with Dave while Rosie went to work. They say the arrangement is a godsend.

"She'll take him to the grocery store; he loves going to the grocery store and taking his time looking things over," Rosie said. "When he goes with me, I don't have that kind of time."

The arrangement has been a Godsend for both Dave and Rosie. "There's a sense of normalcy and sanity for 10 hours when I'm away," Rosie said.

At the same time, she said Dave has opportunities for social interaction outside the house. "I'm not interested in someone sitting in the house with him watching TV," Rosie said. "He wants to get out and go for a drive and see what's going on."

They realize the arrangement may not be right for everyone, but in their case it works.

"We feel very, very blessed to have met this young woman who comes in and helps out ... and has a heart for it."

... continued on page 22



*I*t's the difference between finding somewhere you can stay, and somewhere you never want to leave.

Contrary to what we'd like to believe, middle age doesn't last forever. Perhaps it's time we stopped being so afraid of getting old and cherished life for the remarkable journey it has been and that is still to come. For only then can we open our hearts and minds to experiencing the joys of everyday existence. The way we see it, it's about living the whole of life. Something that, as the nation's largest non-for-profit provider of senior care and services, we have made our daily mission. And our life's work.

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Perspective

Meanwhile, Dave and Rosie have maintained a positive perspective.

"There are things that happen that are really truly tragic, and this isn't one of them," Rosie said about Parkinson's disease.

"I wish we had been 80 and not 65 when this happened to us, but this is not that troubling to me."

She and Dave could have lost one of their teenage sons to an illness, and that has become the measuring stick for all other life challenges.

"Health issues with an aging spouse pales in comparison," Rosie said.

"I can be frustrated, but I can't really think this is tragic. There's a lot to be grateful for. ... We have very supportive family and friends."

When asked what's been the most challenging for

Dave since the diagnosis, he paused before answering.

"It changes the way you look at life every day," he said.

"You have to resign yourself to the changes that are occurring ... and do what you can do, like exercise."

Rosie said she has a harder time with this.

"Ultimately we're not in control, and that's hard for me," she said, adding that Dave has been better about accepting his condition than she has.

"There's some kind of blessing in the fact that he doesn't dwell on things he

can't change," Rosie said.

"And he does have a sense of humor ... he laughs at me when I accuse him of not trying."

"She's funny," Dave said.

Along the way, their experience revealed a serious unmet need for services among local families struggling with dementia-related illnesses.

"There are tons of people with problems worse than ours," Rosie said. "We're just a little piece of this. There are people who are trapped in their homes all the time."

The Paquettes strongly advise other caregivers to seek help.

"For people to be mentally healthy themselves, they need to be away for prolonged periods of time," Rosie said. "Otherwise you start to get this feeling of entrapment."

Joining forces to meet a need

She and Dave are sharing their experience with a consortium of Luverne and Rock County agencies joining forces to address the challenges of memory loss condi-

There is hope. There is help. There are answers. Several agencies in Rock County are joining forces to pool resources for local families facing Alzheimer's and dementia disorders. See page 24 for information about their first event on Aug. 20 that drew more than 50 people to the Generations building in Luverne.



"It changes the way you look at life every day. You have to resign yourself to the changes that are occurring ... and do what you can do, like exercise."

— Dave Paquette, Parkinson's disease patient with Lewy body dementia

tions among local families.

It's called Rock County Dementia Network, and its goal is to improve the wellbeing of caregivers and in turn help their loved ones. (See the related story on page 24.)

"The need is huge," said George Bonnema, president of Generations (formerly Rock County Senior Citizens).

"And we've hidden it for so long. Most families haven't wanted to talk about it, but the stigma is finally breaking down."

On Aug. 20 Generations, Good Samaritan Society, ACE of Southwestern Minnesota and the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging hosted Dr. Joseph Gaugler for two sessions about supporting families and professionals who care for people with memory loss.

Bonnema agrees it's like chipping away at the tip of the iceberg.

"But this all has to start somewhere, and this is a start," he said. "We want to help our caregivers by getting their loved ones out of there and into a safe environment."



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'There is help. You are not alone.'

Rock County Dementia Network organizes for families facing challenges of Alzheimer's and dementia

An estimated one in nine people over 65 have dementia or conditions related to memory loss. In Rock County, the prevalence may be greater, given older rural populations, given that one third of people older than 85 will be diagnosed with dementia.

For families caring for loved ones with dementia, the responsibilities can be overwhelming, and a local group is working to provide relief.

"The need is huge," said George Bonnema, president of Generations (formerly Rock County Senior Citizens).

"And we've hidden it for so long. Most families haven't wanted to talk about it, but the stigma is finally breaking down."

Bonnema is among a team of volunteers and local agencies working to address the challenges of memory loss and dementia among local families.

Stop hiding behind the stigma and start the conversation

The goal is simple:

"We're getting the conversation started," said Jason Swanson, who helped organize an Aug. 20 event in Luverne to introduce Rock County's Dementia Network.

Swanson is director of the Minnesota River Area on Aging, and he contributed to the Aug. 20 event with Jill Wolf, who works locally through MNRAA.

"There's help out there," Wolf said, when asked what the group's primary goal is.

"You're not alone, all you need to is ask."

Her office is working with Generations to set up the Rock County Dementia Network in order to provide a one-stop location for families facing dementia challenges.

"We want to raise awareness so people are more comfortable talking about dementia," Wolf said.

"And we can start thinking about how we can be a friend to dementia patients and their caregivers."

Caring for caregivers

Respite options for caregivers tops the list of needs, Bonnema said. "It can seem overwhelming, but we have to start somewhere, and this is a start," he said about Tuesday's event. "We want to help our

caregivers by giving them options for respite care."

One respite care option may be Rock County Opportunities, which has certified staff and space to offer drop-in adult day care.

Another local initiative is a Memory Café at Poplar Creek assisted living apartments in Luverne.

It's not respite care, but it provides a safe and comfortable space where caregivers and their loved ones can socialize, listen to music, play games, and enjoy other appropriate activities.

Care and empathy

Meanwhile, another group is working on Memory Kits to help spur conversation. They could include farming items, baking utensils, gardening tools or other items that may strike a chord in someone's memory.

The Rock County Dementia Network team includes Generations, MNRAA, Good Samaritan Communities, ACE of Southwest Minnesota and Rock County, and local schools and law enforcement.

The Aug. 20 event provided virtual aging and dementia experiences for interested participants.

The process illustrates what it's like to have poor hearing, poor sight and neuropathy in their limbs and extremities.

Earphones with background noise, heavy glasses with smeared lenses and rice grains in shoes are used to recreate the experience of aging and dementia.

"Frustrated," "disoriented" and "helpless" were some of the words participants used to describe the experience, which was designed to encourage caregivers to use patience and empathy with individuals who are elderly and/or have dementia.

For questions about the network and its services, contact Carrie Soto at 507-283-1996.



Photos and text
by Lori Sorenson

Renae Reu suits up to begin her virtual dementia experience Tuesday in the Generations building. Earphones with background noise, heavy glasses with smeared lenses and rice grains in shoes are used to recreate the experience of aging and dementia.



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Life-affirming. and seasons - spring brings new growth, and each fall the leaves change color.

Generations recently sponsored an event to introduce the Rock County Dementia Network. Read on:



If you reach old age, chances are you'll have some dementia. Here's what you need to know

More than 50 gathered at the Generations building on Aug. 20 for Dr. Joseph Gaugler's presentations about Alzheimer's disease and other dementia.

He provided research and statistics about related memory loss conditions — the differences between them, early warning signs, new treatments and ideas for prevention.

But there was one message he hoped would be the most clear:

"The real takeaway from all of this is that 35 percent of dementia risk is modifiable," said Gaugler, a professor at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

"That's a big number; there are things we can do to reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's and other dementia."

His work focuses on supporting families and professionals who care for individuals with memory loss.

He said there's never going to be one single cure or prevention, but he said the same activities that lend to a healthy heart — proper diet and exercise — are good for the brain.

In addition, research is showing that people who remain socially engaged also have healthier and more stimulated brains, which can also reduce dementia risk.

While one-third of dementia risk can be modified, Gaugler also acknowledged that many cases of Alzheimer's and dementia have other causes — such as hereditary factors — beyond anyone's control.

In some cases, hearing loss can contribute to dementia, because it's difficult to socialize when hearing loss gets in the way of conversations, and resulting isolation can lead to depression and dementia.

In all cases, early detection is key to successful management, and Gaugler said it's important that primary care doctors screen patients for dementia.

In rural areas, however, this often doesn't happen, because doctors and their patients tend to have longtime relationships and stigma can prevent action.

"Some doctors may not want to push the issue because they don't want to upset their patient," he said. "So, it's easier to just address the issue at hand, such as a bad knee or heart."

The problem with this, Gaugler said, is that it reinforces stigmas and prevents important conversations.

"We have to ask our doctors for the screening," he said. "We

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- Try programs at local community centers
- Get 7-8 hours of sleep every night

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"The real takeaway from all of this is that 35 percent of dementia risk is modifiable ... there are things we can do to reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's and other dementia."

— Dr. Joseph Gaugler, professor at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health

have to be fierce advocates to get the care we need."

For families who know they're facing dementia, they can prepare for what to expect, seek resources and in general be more empathetic when symptoms occur.

"Don't try to orient them to our reality," Gaugler said.

"It's less about giving an answer to the same repeated question and more about why are they asking that question over and over again."

Gaugler provided several online resources for families to seek additional information, but the most helpful source is the Alzheimer's Association website, alz.org.

His Aug. 20 presentation was part of a formal introduction of the Rock County Dementia Network, which pools local resources to help families facing dementia and memory loss challenges. (See the related story on page 24.)

Compiled
and written
by Lori Sorenson

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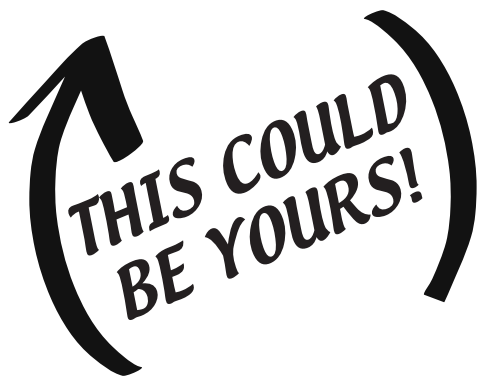
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