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Momentia in My Neighborhood

*Creativity + Community
by Kathleen Landel, MA,
PAC Trainer and Mentor*

When I first walked into the lobby of the Edmonds Center for the Arts, the gathering patrons looked like any group of theatergoers. There were couples and family groups filing into their seats, with the occasional walker and wheelchair. We were all here to attend the *Golden Era Sing-Along*, part of the theater's Dementia-Inclusive Film Series.

The lights dimmed, but were kept high enough so the audience could see and move around when needed. The Northwest Film Forum's Liz Shepherd took us through an uplifting guided tour of film clips from beloved musicals, the lyrics big on the screen, and everyone singing along. What made this theater experience different is that people were free to talk or get up during the film. I noticed volunteers sprinkled around the theater keeping an eye out to help anyone that needed assistance. When I spoke with Gillian Jones, the theater's programming director, she said that the series was a partnership with SnoMentia, which had been modeled after Momentia.

Momentia is a Seattle-based grassroots movement empowering people experiencing brain change and their loved ones to remain connected and active in the community. Community partners offer public spaces for "dementia-friendly" activities like walks at the Woodland Park Zoo, tours at the Frye Art Museum, Alzheimer's Cafés, Meet Me at the Movies, Art Making, All Present Song Circle, and Improvisation Class.

The Momentia movement is transforming what it means to live with dementia in community and changing the story from one of despair to one of connection, purpose, and finding joy in the moment. As PAC practitioners, we know that the Momentia activities are tapping into the right side of the brain with the strengths that remain with dementia - music, rhythm, and social chit-chat.

The University of Washington Memory and Brain Wellness Center spent a year developing and testing a model for communities to use to start their own dementia-friendly programs. The model, "Momentia in My Neighborhood," (MIMN) uses a structured grassroots process that includes the voices of people living with dementia and their loved ones, the support of local partner organizations, and the unique assets of each community. SnoMentia, in Snohomish County north of Seattle, was the second community to implement the model.

As the musical tour came to an end, I made my way out to the lobby with the rest of the audience. Gillian seemed to know everyone's name and received warm hugs from several people. Two couples had graciously stayed to chat with me afterwards. They shared their sense of connection and being part of a community by attending activities at their favorite public places. Both couples laughed about their antics at the improv class, some enjoying the drama escapades more than others. Joy and connection were definitely what the morning had been all about.

If you'd like to learn more about the "Momentia in My Neighborhood" model, contact Marigrace Becker, University of Washington Memory and Brain Wellness Center Program Manager for Community Education & Impact: [Email Marigrace Becker](#), 206-744-2017.

Additional Resources

VIDEO:

[Changemaker: Marigrace Becker](#)

Memory and Brain Wellness Center, University of Washington

LINKS:

[Momentia](#)

[SnoMentia Article](#)

[UW Memory and Brain Wellness Center](#)

Kathleen earned a Master of Arts in Whole Systems Design from Antioch University, Seattle with a focus on community-level systems change. As a PAC mentor, she draws on her experience as a strategy consultant and facilitator to health and human services nonprofits. Kathleen's personal journey as a care partner for parents living with dementia was transformed when she met Teepa in 2012. Since becoming a PAC Certified Trainer and Coach, Kathleen has partnered with senior centers and the libraries in her rural Northwest community to offer PAC workshops for family care partners and professionals. She hopes to spark a dementia-friendly program on her island community.