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December 2019

Spreading Awareness and Understanding of Dementia



The AgeOptions planning team hosted a dementia awareness potluck/lunch-and-learn for staff members on November 20. The event is part of AgeOptions' commitment to help spread awareness and understanding of dementia in hopes of reducing fear and avoidance and increasing support and inclusivity for people living with dementia.

The team chose November for the event because it is Alzheimer's Awareness Month and Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia.

Cristina Diaz led the presentation, discussing the different types and stages of dementia and tips for effective communication. She explained what it means to be a Dementia Friend and the five key messages of dementia friends, calling on staff members to "ACT as a Dementia Friend" in their communities. A Dementia Friend is someone who takes initiative, learns about what it is like to live with dementia and turns that understanding into action.

Cristina, Erika Healy, Chelsea Hawkins and Katie Zahm have been trained as Dementia Friends Champions – volunteers who undergo training to prepare them to encourage others to make a positive difference to people living with dementia in their communities. Dementia Friend Champions can lead in-person Dementia Friends sessions that give people information about the personal impact of dementia and what they can do to help.

Cristina also participates in Oak Park's Dementia Friendly Action Team. She hopes to observe, aid and learn from the community's Dementia Friendly Initiative and bring that knowledge to AgeOptions.

More information about Dementia Friends is available from [Dementia Friends USA](#), a global movement to change the way people think, act and talk about dementia. Started by the Alzheimer's Society in the United Kingdom, the initiative holds that by helping everyone in a community to understand what dementia is and how it affects people, each of us can make a difference for people touched by dementia.

Dementia Friends Illinois supports the Dementia Friends USA movement. More information is available on the [website](#).

