A Dementia Friendly LIFE

Linking Individuals & Families Through Education and Engagement

2024 Annual Report

Prepared by

Carole Klingler, CEO

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About LIFE:

A letter from the Founder

Dear Friends,

As we reflect on the incredible journey of 2024, we are filled with immense gratitude for the unwavering support of our LIFE community. Together, we have made tremendous strides in our mission to bring hope, connection, and joy to individuals living with dementia and their care partners.

This past year has been truly remarkable. Our Memory Cafés welcomed more participants than ever before, creating moments of laughter, creativity, and companionship. From music therapy sessions to art workshops and shared meals, we witnessed firsthand how these gatherings foster meaningful connections and enrich lives. Highlights from 2024 include:

- Expanding our Reach: We successfully launched two new Memory Café locations, making our programs more accessible to families in neighboring communities.
- Special Events: Our annual "Loving LIFE" campaign in February raised critical funds to sustain and grow our programs, thanks to your incredible generosity.
- Community Partnerships: Collaborations with local businesses and organizations allowed us to host intergenerational events, bringing together people of all ages to celebrate the power of community.

We cannot do this without you. Your support–whether through donations, volunteering, or simply spreading the word–is the heart of our organization. Together, we can create a brighter future for those impacted by dementia.

From all of us at LIFE, a Dementia Friendly Foundation, thank you for being part of this journey. Here's to another year of hope, connection, and love.

Warm Regards,

Meet Our Team

CAROLE KLINGLER

BSN, RN, CDP, CEO & CO-FOUNDER

Carole spent years as an ICU nurse and was the Director of Nursing for Kendal at Oberlin. She also worked as an adjunct faculty member for Lorain County Community College Allied Health and Nursing Program and in Hospice and Palliative Care in the role of Team Leader and Community Facility Coordinator for the Lorain County team. Carole earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from Indiana Wesleyan University. She is a Certified Dementia Practitioner and a Master Trainer for Dementia Friends Ohio.

MARYANNE DUNCAN

SERVICE MANAGER, CDP - WELLINGTON, ELYRIA, & AVON LAKE

KARINA FUERY

SERVICE MANAGER, CDV - AMHERST & NORTH RIDGEVILLE

DENISE TAYLOR

FLOAT SERVICE MANAGER - LORAIN COUNTY

CHRISTEN UHL

SERVICE MANAGER, CDV - WOOSTER & ORRVILLE

JENNIFER TUCKER

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR, CDV

EVELYN REYES

BILINGUAL SERVICES DIRECTOR

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Vision and Mission

Vision

- LIFE strives to empower communities with a beacon of hope, by uniting essential services and compassionate support tailored for those touched by dementia. Our unwavering commitment is to extend this paradigm of care to underserved communities, enriching lives and fostering resilience.

Mission

- LIFE's mission of faith is to partner with anyone touched by dementia, and offer resources, education, and engaging activities which promote and improve quality of life.

About our Memory Cafés

- **2 counties**
- **7 locations**
- **150 active participants**
- **over 400 lives touched since 2016**
- **over 25 community partners**

LIFE - A Dementia Friendly Foundation has the following locations:

Lorain County

- Monday at Bethany Lutheran Church in Wellington
- Tuesday at Church of the Nazarene in Elyria
- Wednesday at Faith Baptist Church in Amherst
- Wednesday at Avon Lake United Church of Christ in Avon Lake
- Thursday at Fields United Methodist Church in North Ridgeville

Wayne County

- Monday at Christ Church, United Church of Christ in Orrville
- Wednesday at First Presbyterian Church in Wooster

Memory Cafés typically host an average of 24 attendees at each location, supported by a dedicated Service Manager and at least 3 volunteers per site. These gatherings are made possible through the generosity of churches and community sponsors. Our supporters contribute more than just space - they provide lunches, lead exercises, coordinate engaging activities, and invite educational speakers to enhance the weekly experience. Many of our sponsors go above and beyond by advocating for LIFE, and organizing fundraising events.

Financial Summary

	2022	2023	2024
INCOME	61,549.25	192011.51	165,128.85
EXPENSES	76,079.81	95573.32	169,418.65
TOTAL	(14,530.56)	96438.19*	(4289.80)**

LIFE is graciously supported, not only by our valued community partners, but by donations from individuals within the local community, grant support and various fundraising activities.

A corporate sponsorship and estate donation program was developed and launched in 2024. We are pleased to have these additional forms of support available to the businesses and individuals in our community.

*At year end 2023, grants were received by the Good Neighbor Thrift Shop ($17500) and the Wayne County Community Foundation ($15000) to support the opening of 2 locations in early 2024. In addition, a grant cycle change at the Lorain County Community Foundation resulted in a 1 time adjustment to our annual award ($20833).

**Lorain County Community Foundation Endowment Fund balance is $23747.73 as of 12/31/24.

Highlights & Awards

- New partnerships, corporate supports, and many new faces in 2024. Thank you for your continued participation and support.

- Connect to A Cause Most Improved Award for largest % increase in donations from 2023 to 2024 fundraising campaign.

- LIFE was fortified by grants from the Lorain County Community Foundation from 2021 through the 2024 grant cycle. The Foundation provides funding for non-profit organizations that serve Lorain County residents in the areas of Arts & Culture, Education & Youth Development, Health & Human Services and Strengthening Lorain Counties.

- LIFE received support from the Good Neighbor Grant to launch and operate a new Memory Cafe` location in Avon Lake.

- LIFE received support from the Wayne County Community Foundation to launch and operate a new Memory Cafe` location in Orrville.

- In 2020, LIFE was recognized by the Manhattan Institute, as a recipient of the Institutes $25,000 Civil Society Award for advancing America's long tradition of supporting a civil society through its work to improve and strengthen community.

Testimonials

My husband, George, my leprechaun was a remarkable man until the end of his life. Life became difficult as his dementia progressed, in spite of his determination to keep it at bay by doggedly working on the therapy sessions assigned at the Cleveland Clinic Occupational Therapy Department. Never a quitter, when we learned about the LIFE Memory Café programs, George was enthusiastic about participating. The organization changed our lives to an amazing degree. He was delighted by the opportunity to engage with warm, welcoming people and experience SUCCESS in endeavors.

Volunteer, Laurie King brought out his need to excel with her ingenious approach to exercise. The laughter she and her dogs evoked while encouraging movement is heartwarming. His joy at making crafts surprised me. The crafts are well thought out to ensure success and a feeling of accomplishment. Although our participation in 2 sessions at a LIFE Memory Café each week didn't extend George's life, our lives were vastly improved. George thrived in the warmth of the loving, accepting and nurturing community.

I found support that only people who have experienced living with dementia can provide. Care partners shared problems and potential solutions with warm hugs of understanding. Programs provided knowledge of available services and costs involved. When George lost his battle with cancer, the LIFE community surrounded me with love and compassion that I will never let go of. I took cupcakes to one of the cafés we loved on his birthday. It was a wonderful way to celebrate his life among people who knew who he was.

I will always be a member of the LIFE community. No one else provides the love and support that improves the quality of life so quietly and gently. I was given George's name tag after he died. It lives on my refrigerator as a reminder of how good life was with great support.

Beth Crossman

Beth Crossman
Amherst, OH

Testimonials

I would like to share our experience with LIFE, A Dementia Friendly Foundation.

My husband Chris was diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment, three years ago. We initially attended the Wellington Memory Cafe` as a way to connect with resources that would support us on our new adventure.

While the Memory Cafe` has provided us with access to many resources, we have gained so much more! In fact, the Memory Cafe` has become the social highlight of our week! I was surprised that Chris was willing to attend since he is in the early stages of dementia. He looks forward to seeing everyone at the Memory Cafe` each week. They have become our friends.

When I asked Chris what he likes the best about the Memory Cafe`, this was his response: “I like the music. I enjoy getting together with other people. I really enjoy the exercise class and the craft time. It is a lot of fun!”

For me. as a care partner, I have found a great support system in the weekly peer group time. I also enjoy the music, and art therapies, as well. I became a volunteer for LIFE because the Memory Cafe` has made such an impact on our entire family. I want more families to experience the love and support we have received through LIFE. As a volunteer, I enjoy helping those with dementia to maintain their life skills through the different therapies offered at the Memory Cafe` and providing support for their care partners.

Christopher D Braun Robin Braun

Christopher Braun
Robin Braun
Wellington, OH

Testimonials

I was touched to have been asked by the inspirational found of LIFE, Carole Klingler, to submit a testimonial. Of course it was an immediate YES!! Each and every one of us has been blessed by Carole's vision to have created this incredible program. One that helps us navigate through this unexpected and unplanned for journey of Dementia and/or Alzheimer's. But most importantly, all the folks at LIFE have become extended family.

Our wonderful city of North Ridgeville has an amazing Senior Center, and their terrific program director is who first informed me of LIFE, just last summer. In fact, North Ridgeville is one of the first cities to implement a Dementia Friendly Community. All of their first responder teams have been educated as Dementia Friends through the Ohio Council for Cognitive Health - to address individuals with the disease. I've sappily, and repeatedly, said that the stars have aligned, and our prayers were finally answered in finding LIFE!

Each of the LIFE Memory Cafe`s has a Service Manager to overlook their care site. The most-lovely, Karina is ours. She has a most beautiful heart and is faith grounded. She and her very dedicated and steadfast volunteer staff keep the program lively. It is obvious they genuinely care for the participants and each other in the way they interact. One of my first and dearest friends, who is part of the medical field, recently retired, and I told her all about this amazing program. She expressed an interest in volunteering with us and has never looked back!

Each week our cafe` begins with prayer and devotion. Having a spiritual foundation has been an important component to many of us. Not to mention the generosity of the churches donating our meeting space. The lunches, art expressions, exercise, and music are generously provided by local supports in the community.

My only regret is not learning of LIFE sooner. My husband was diagnosed in 2017 - on his birthday. We sadly had quite a bit of experience with the disease as his mother, our sister-in-law's mother, and an aunt and uncle of mine all had a form of dementia. In July 2022, our sweetest, eldest sister was diagnosed. Sadly, she declined rapidly and passed in December of 2023. It was most heartbreaking for us.

I'll close this narrative with a most grateful heart for being part of a LIFE Memory Cafe` family. This unique and invaluable program deserves continued support for those experiencing this disease.

With sincere gratefulness,

Brandan Sell
Stephanie Sell
North Ridgeville, OH

Contact Us

440.935.3506

info@dflife.org

www.dflife.org

Donate

When you donate to LIFE, your dollars go directly toward operating costs to manage and staff our Memory Café locations.

There is never a cost to participants or care partners to attend our Memory Cafe` activities and events.

LIFE - A Dementia Friendly Foundation is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization.

send checks to PO Box 117
Oberlin, OH 44074

www.dflife.org/donate.html