

6 September 2017

Montessori approach brings joy to people living with dementia

An innovative approach to supporting people living with dementia is brightening the lives of seniors and their families in Sunshine North.

St Bernadette's Community Respite House – run by not-for-profit organisation Villa Maria Catholic Homes – has introduced the Montessori approach to its care delivery.

Montessori has long been associated with children's education, but has since expanded to consider whole-of-life care including for people living with dementia and people with a disability. It helps empower people by structuring their care around their own personal needs and desires, not a prescriptive list of tasks.

September is Dementia Awareness Month, aimed to increase the understanding of dementia within the community.

Domenica Cesile, 78, is one of ten older people living with dementia who attend St Bernadette's each week. The service gives seniors a chance to make new friends and take part in activities such as crafts, cooking, ball games, sitting exercises and iPad sessions. It also gives their carers, like Domenica's daughter Silvana, a much-needed break.

Knowing her mum is participating in activities she enjoys is important to Silvana.

"Mum loves gardening and going on walks with Brenda (centre coordinator). She finds tranquility in coloring in and drawing. And especially enjoys attending the chapel."

Making pasta is also a favourite pastime, linking Domenica back to her Italian roots.

"When mum was well she would make homemade pasta several times a week. She learnt this from her mother as homemade pasta is a signature dish from her hometown region of L'Aquila (Italy). My earliest memories are of her teaching me how to use the long rolling pin to make her sheets – no pasta machine back then!"

Although dementia has begun to rob Domenica of many things, it hasn't dampened her spirit.

"Mum is a caring and loving person. She has a witty personality. Even with her dementia she still has a laugh with us and makes jokes. She's constantly concerned about the children and looking after them and making sure they are feed."

St Bernadette's coordinator Brenda Suva said the Montessori approach – aligning activities to individuals' specific likes and interests – just "made sense".

MORE



“People with dementia, like Domenica, have lived rich and full lives. The most important thing we try to do is to relate to past experiences and engage people in meaningful activities. This helps improve their self-esteem and sense of pride, which is lovely to see.”

St Bernadette’s will hold an Open Day on Thursday, September 28 from 11am to 3pm at 52 Meadowbank Drive, Sunshine North. Morning tea and a light lunch provided. Please RSVP by September 21 to Brenda Suva on (03) 9310 8749.

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About Villa Maria Catholic Homes

Villa Maria Catholic Homes is committed to working in partnership with people of all ages and abilities to help them achieve their individual goals and dreams, remain connected to their communities and enjoy their independence.

As an agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, our values including respect, compassion and inclusion guide us to deliver the highest quality services to individuals of all faiths and backgrounds.

We are a Catholic, not-for-profit organisation providing residential aged care, affordable housing options, retirement living, senior support, disability, carer and education services to more than 6,500 people across Victoria and southern New South Wales.

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