

# Why Memory Matters

## It Matters to JoEllen Layne's Dad, Elvin Boswell

On the days that Elvin Boswell got to attend Memory Matters classes, he couldn't get dressed and out the door fast enough. "They were truly the high points of his life," JoEllen Layne says of her 88-year-old father who just recently moved to a Veteran's home. "He'd get to do memory exercises with a group. He'd do word games, he'd do yoga while listening to music, toss a balloon around a circle...things he really enjoyed." These activities might seem trivial to some, but for a person suffering with dementia, they re-ignite critical brain circuitry while they're engaged in fun, memorable activities.

JoEllen, who's cared for her father over the past 13 years, says Memory Matters has literally been a lifesaver. "It's wonderful to see my dad perking up and happy," As proof of the impact the classes have had on this once hard-working father's mood and memory, JoEllen describes a subtle but important change she noticed in his phone conversations with his two sons. "Normally, he'd have really short conversations with them, nothing substantial. Then one day, right after he'd been to class, he called my brother. He was so animated, I bet they talked for 30 minutes." Now her brothers time their calls to correspond with the end of his classes. Another positive outcome was that Elvin actually remembered them. "He'd quickly forget the short conversations, so I'd show him caller ID to prove he'd spoken with his son. But boy, he'd remember the conversations he had after his classes, and he'd talk about them later," she says. For people



LUANN & KURT LUNDQUIST

struggling with a loved one's memory loss, these little "remembered" moments are priceless.

JoEllen credits her initial consultation with LuAnn Lundquist at Memory Matters Utah for getting both her father and herself on the path to

a much better quality of life with support and programs desperately needed.

"I can't express how much she helped us. She provided resources and has always been there when I needed support.

**One woman, with the help of her strong organization, is giving her all to meet the specific challenges of dementia.**

Few people have a better understanding of the challenges dementia presents than LuAnn, who is Founder and Executive Director of the nonprofit Memory Matters Utah (formerly the Alzheimer's and Dementia Society). LuAnn is a licensed therapeutic recreation technician with a degree in social and behavioral science with over 12 years serving people with dementia and their caregivers.

Before starting the nonprofit in 2012, LuAnn worked for the Alzheimer's Association, at one point as statewide education coordinator. "I got fabulous training, there," she says. But when the Association closed its southern Utah office, LuAnn and her husband dipped into their own savings to continue providing services to Southern Utah seniors. Not only was

Memory Matters Utah is a nonprofit that depends on financial donations and volunteers to meet the needs of those affected by dementia.

We asked LouAnn what she wanted for Christmas: For our wish list, the following would be helpful:

- Art Supplies for our FUN ART program
- Postage Stamps
- Copy Paper
- Folding, padded chairs (Costco)
- 48" diameter round white folding tables
- Activity Aprons - solid colors
- What we need the most are donations to help us remodel and furnish the new adult day care.

Thank you for helping promote this vision for a community supported dementia activity center. It is so important and I am grateful that you saw that as well. LuAnn

If you're interested in getting help or contributing, visit [Memorymattersutah.org](http://Memorymattersutah.org) or drop in:

168 N. 100 E. Ste 104 / St. George / Mon-Fri 9 to 5.

### Memory Matters Utah provides:

- Caregiving consultations and referrals
- Education and support on early stage memory loss
- Telephone reassurance
- Free testing and brain health education
- Cognitive training classes
- Support groups

### Did you know?

Most seniors in our area do not have family nearby?

Of those seniors needing help, many don't qualify for government assistance and also can't afford to pay for services on their own?

it extraordinarily selfless of them to do this, it turns out it was also extremely necessary, because of the rapid rise of the condition in our community.

**63% of all Utah seniors live in the St. George.**

One of the most scenic and warm locations in Utah, St. George has friendly people, a low cost of living and plenty to offer seniors in the form of arts, activities, and the outdoors. It's no mystery why so many seniors from Utah and elsewhere choose to retire here.

**The St. George area reaps enormous benefits from this growing demographic.**

Most seniors are committed to living full, active lives, and giving back to their community. The growing influx of people at or near retirement age boosts the economy, generates jobs—and their generous volunteerism adds depth and wisdom to inspire younger generations.

**With great benefits come great challenges**

Unfortunately, with the natural process of aging comes illness and physical decline. According to a recent Intermountain Healthcare study, the ratio of seniors in

Washington County will soon be more than one in three.

"Right now, over 3,500 seniors in Washington County are suffering with dementia," LuAnn explains, "and that number is going to skyrocket as this segment of the population grows. It affects police, first responders, hospitals, retail stores...all of us on the road. Everyone is affected by these statistics."

For LuAnn, her vision is to provide a community-supported adult facility that meets the needs of southern Utah residents suffering with dementia and their caregivers.

LuAnn is careful in how she characterizes the program. "It's not babysitting. It will feel like they're going to a club. Activities will be meaningful. For example, those with early-stage dementia will have access to a wellness center and they'll be able to engage in activities like creating hygiene kits to help people in hurricane-stricken areas, or finish off toys for Happy Factory [a Cedar City nonprofit that makes toys for physically challenged and underprivileged kids]. This boosts



Elvin learning technology from his great grandchildren

their self-esteem, and that's vital to everyone's well being," she explains.

This holiday season, as you look for meaningful ways to make a difference, we at St. George Magazine recommend contributing to Memory Matters, a truly valuable organization that changes the lives of some well-deserving people in our community. *SGM*



Thanks to Memory Matters, individuals dealing with dementia and their caregivers have hope, support, and lots of fun!

