

Hispanic Heritage Spotlight

Memory Café Offers Vital Support to Hispanic Community

In an effort to create an inclusive and supportive space for individuals living with dementia, the Racine Public Library launched a monthly bilingual Memory Café on June 13. Diane Rogstad, Outreach Supervisor at the Aging & Disability Resource Center of Racine County, collaborates with this initiative to provide a welcoming environment for those navigating the complexities of memory loss. "There are other cafes in Racine County, but there was still a missing element," recalls Rogstad. "What was needed was a recreational and social place where folks could gather, build trust, and connect with others on a similar journey." Having had family members affected by Alzheimer's, Rogstad understood the importance of such a space.

Addressing a need in the community for bilingual services, the Memory Café is instrumental in providing solace and support to Hispanics, a population that faces a higher risk of dementia. One of three Memory Cafés the ADRC is a part of in Racine County, the library offers a distinct setting. Rogstad highlights the significance of the library's recent renovation, resulting in an easily accessible and aesthetically pleasing venue. "It exudes a warm and inviting atmosphere," she notes. The Café at the library, which holds events in Spanish and English, is a joint effort with the Aging & Disability Resource Center of Racine County, the Racine Public Library, Senior Helpers of Racine, Assisted Living Locators, and the Wisconsin Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.

The positive feedback from attendees underscores the success of the Café. Rogstad recalls the initial challenge of initiating the program in June, during vacation season, but says that the Café saw a surge in interest. "We've had families attend who truly relished the experience," she recalls. When attendees ask if they can bring grandchildren along, especially when schools are on break, Rogstad says that the answer is "a resounding yes—they are more than welcome!" Attendees have shared their fondness for music, popular games like Bingo, and even a State Fair-themed event featuring rubber pig races on a makeshift track.

Rogstad emphasizes the importance of trust and continuity. This collaborative effort seeks to provide familiar faces to support attendees. "As social creatures, humans inherently crave connection and purpose, regardless of memory loss," says Rogstad, a connection she believes is particularly meaningful after the pandemic: "Providing safe and welcoming spaces is essential for combating social isolation and fostering a sense of belonging."

The library's bilingual Memory Café takes place on the second Tuesday of each month from 1-2:30 p.m. Participation is free, and those interested can register by contacting Viridiana Rocha at 262.619.2545 or viridiana.rocha@racinelibrary.info.

