

MEMORY CARE & WELLNESS SERVICES A New Study in Pierce County

Several years ago, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services and the University of Washington obtained a federal demonstration grant to determine if a dementia-specific adult day program would make a difference for participants and their family caregivers. The program, which came to be known as “Memory Care & Wellness Services” was made available at adult day centers in Bellingham, Burlington, and Seattle.

The Memory Care & Wellness Services program offers the person with dementia a safe and accepting place to be with others who understand what it’s like to live with memory loss, a simple exercise program to keep the participant moving and walking regularly, activities that promote good health and communication skills, and assistance with medication, nursing or personal care if needed.

The service also helps the family caregiver by offering a way to keep a loved one active and involved with others, scheduled times each week to meet his/her own needs, regular opportunities to talk with health care workers who know his/her loved one, and an easy way to link up with education and services.

Findings released from the first phase of the University of Washington (UW) Memory Care & Wellness Services study, in June 2010, indicate that participants in the pilot dementia-specific day programs experienced improved quality of life and decreased frequency of behavior problems. According to the Project Coordinator for the Northwest Regional Council, Kim Boon, “The programming helps the person with dementia feel stronger and better, which increases their self-esteem. This translates into a happier person who can do more for himself. When the person is happier, so is the caregiver.” That proved true as the UW study also demonstrated decreased caregiver distress over behavior problems and decreased depressive symptoms and feelings of stress and burden.

A new federal grant is now bringing Memory Care & Wellness Services to Pierce County – at Cascade Park Active Day and MultiCare Adult Day Health. This grant is also a research project – to see if the service makes a difference for local participants. For more information about the Memory Care & Wellness Service study, please contact the Pierce County Aging and Disability Resource Center (253) 798-4600 or (800) 562-0332.