



"In Care Of": Telling the Story of Caregiving through Postcards and Public Art

Presented by: Kristin Voss
WI Alzheimer's Association Conference
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A little about me

- Retired high school teacher
- Family caregiver to an adult daughter
- Professional educator and advocate
- Started Center for Caregiver Serenity

Beginnings of My Work

- National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers - 2022
- Support family caregivers of all ages, from youth to grandparents, and regardless of where they live or what caregiving looks like for them and their loved ones.

Goal 1- Increase awareness of and outreach to family caregivers

Goal 2- Advance partnerships and engagement with family caregivers.

Goal 3- Strengthen services and supports for family caregivers

Goal 4- Ensure financial and workplace security for family caregivers

Goal 5- Expand data, research, and evidence-based practices to support family caregivers.

Partnership with UW-Madison Professor

- Dr. Kristin Litzelman - faculty in the School of Human Ecology Collaborated on the Caregiver Postcard Project
- Research and outreach on family caregiving; what happens when families face a health crisis



Today's Learning Objectives:

- Understand how public art and storytelling can raise awareness about caregiving, to help build better care partnerships and provide strategies for advocating with politicians, policy makers, and health care professionals.
- Recognize the many different ways that caregivers are impacted by their role
- Describe the Caregiver Postcard Project and "In Care of" exhibit



Arts-Based Knowledge Mobilization



- "Using the arts to communicate research has the potential to increase its accessibility"
 - Communicate to target audiences
 - Reduce the knowledge-to-action gap
- Goals of catalyzing:
 - Dialogue
 - Awareness
 - Engagement
 - Advocacy



Aesthetic Cognitivism

- Posits that making and viewing art generates knowledge
 - Changes our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world
 - Sharing complex feelings and ideas
- “Powerful means of deepening our understanding” across different types of knowledge
 - Propositional (know-that; facts); Practical (know-how; skills); Phenomenal (what-it’s-like; experience)
 - Clarification (strengthening and connecting existing beliefs); Reconfiguration (formation of new beliefs)
 - “Science discovers; Art digests”

Eno (2024). What Art Does: An Unfinished Theory. *Riley Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 18.4 (2019): 430–443; Ferran. *Empathic Imaginings and Knowledge of what it is like*. In *Empathy and the Aesthetic Mind: Perspectives on Fiction and Beyond* (2022): 10.

**“ART IS NOT WHAT YOU SEE,
BUT WHAT YOU MAKE
OTHERS SEE”**

EDGAR DEGAS

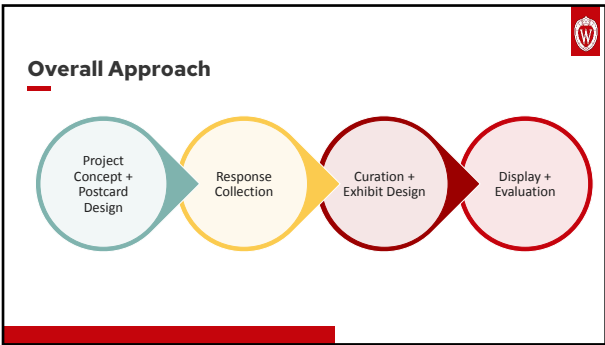
Our Objectives

Lift up the voices of caregivers

Raise awareness of the experience of caregiving

Inspire conversation about the needs and supports for caregivers

Caregiver Postcard Project: Approach



Why Postcards?

- Visually engaging
- Portable and accessible
- Distillation of thoughts
- Public Scholarship / Citizen Science

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Response Collection

Community Networks

- Distribute postcards through community partners (dissemination toolkit)

Online Response Collection

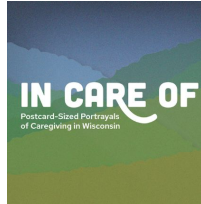
- Send out links to submit responses

In-Person Events

- Caregiver-centered events throughout Wisconsin (presentations, tabling)

Curation, Display and Evaluation

- Drew on multiple ideas: local and state caregiving data; community knowledge; educational materials; and the postcards themselves
- Identified themes and selected representative postcards & visual object
- Center for Design and Material Culture staff helped with design
- Guided tours were available to classes and community groups
- Viewers were invited to submit a reflection card



Virtual Tour

Joys and Challenges

Liminal Spaces

Interior Landscapes

Caregiving can be hard and beautiful at the same time. Honoring caregivers' experience and this complexity puts us in care of caregivers.



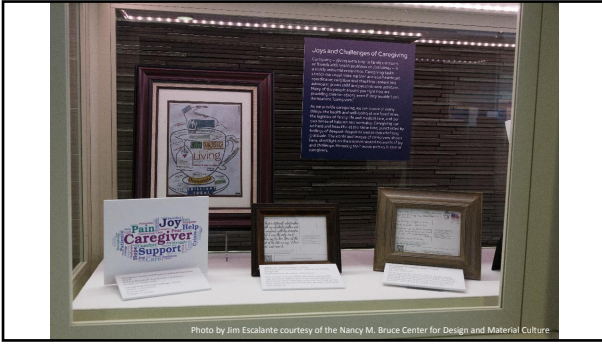
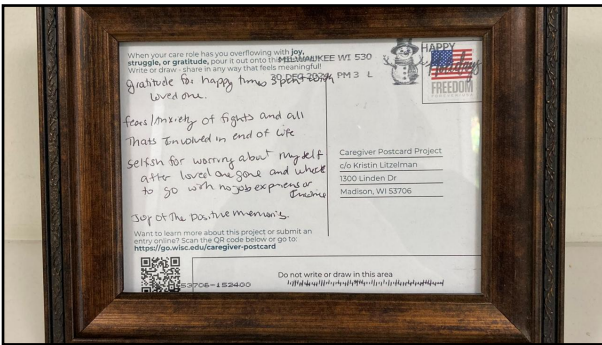


Photo by Jim Escalante courtesy of the Nancy M. Bruce Center for Design and Material Culture



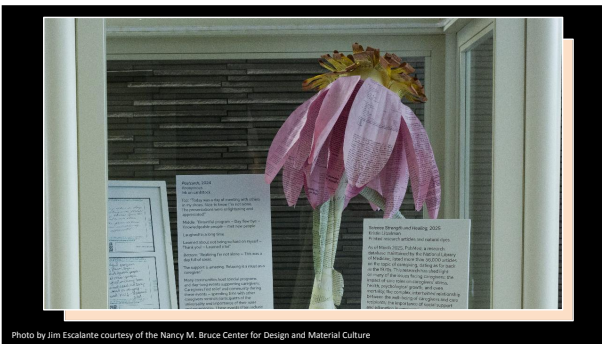


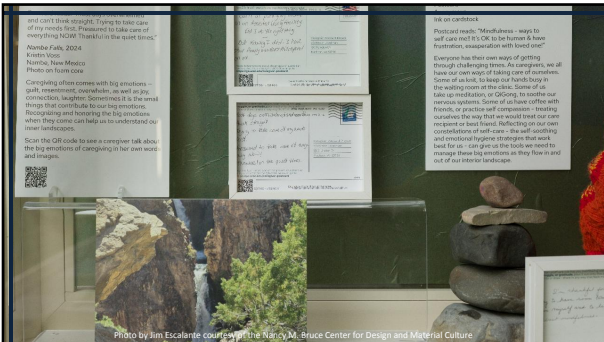
Photo by Jim Escalante courtesy of the Nancy M. Bruce Center for Design and Material Culture

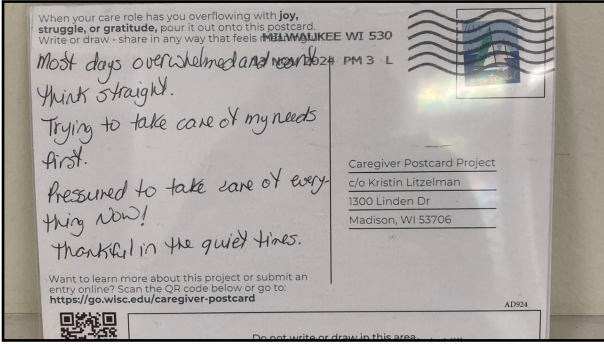
Joys and Challenges

Liminal Spaces

Interior Landscapes

Caregiving shapes us the way that water shapes the land. When we are mapping our interior landscapes, we are in care of ourselves.





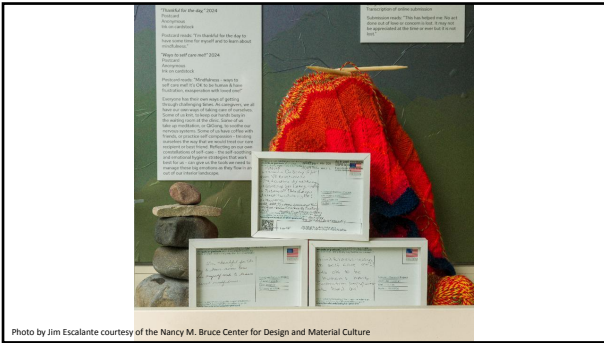
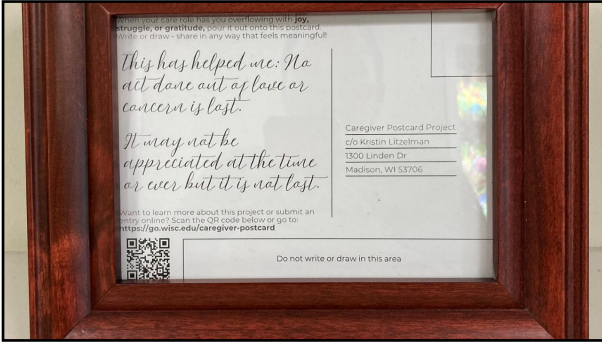
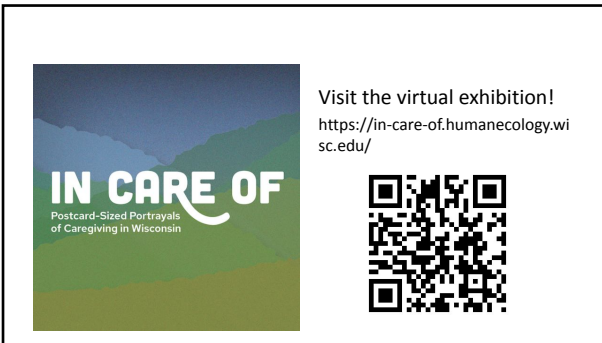


Photo by Jim Escalante courtesy of the Nancy M. Bruce Center for Design and Material Culture



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Evaluation Results

Reach

- Received 52 postcards (19 displayed)
- Hosted eight tours reaching around 90 viewers; and 17 community presentations reaching more than 300 participants
- Project website engagement increased 6-fold between May (13 visits) and November (82 visits)

Impact (Content Analysis)

- Received 58 reflection cards from viewers
- Thematic analysis revealed the transformational power of the exhibition, and its role in knowledge transfer

Themes and Sample Quotes

- Learning (67% of responses)
 - Eye opening to how unique everyone's personal experience with caregiving is, yet how common it is.
- Appreciation and Validation (60% of responses)
 - As someone who is a youth caregiver for a sibling with disabilities, this made me feel so seen
- Activation (40% of responses)
 - This exhibit made me want to be a stronger advocate for family caregiving - this is a public health crisis and people need support!
- Connection and Shared Experience (33% of responses)
 - It has made me think about my mother a lot and her experiences caregiving for my grandma and disabled sister.

Discussion

- How is this landing for you?
- How does this impact the way you engage with caregivers in your role?
- If you are a caregiver - how do you see yourself reflected in all of this?
- How can you see this kind of work helping to raise awareness and have tangible impacts for caregivers?
- How can we use the display to generate conversations?



What's Next?

Lessons, key take-aways and next steps, oh my!



Lessons Learned

- Momentum happens slowly
- Postcard response rate vs engagement/reach
- Creative ideas from community members



Key Takeaways

- Talking about caregiving gets people talking about caregiving
- Novel combinations of art, voice, and public scholarship “hit different”
- Bridging disciplines – Risk paid off
 - But need to think creatively about measuring impact at the next stage
- Ripple effects – more conversations, more impacts, more ideas, more opportunities

Insights and Next Steps

Joys and challenges go hand-in-hand

Feedback from viewers: feeling “seen” and validated

Communities want to replicate

Next steps: Increasing reach, measuring impact

YOUR TURN!!

- Let's take a moment for YOU to recognize and reflect on the way family caregiving shows up in your own life - personally or professionally
- I want to invite YOU to write or draw about your own moments of joy, challenge, or gratitude in caring for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia



Acknowledgements



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