

Power of Connection

Purpose • Partners • Progress

40TH ANNUAL WISCONSIN STATE CONFERENCE

May 19 - 20, 2026

Kalahari Resort | Wisconsin Dells

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[Conference Schedule](#)

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Presenting sponsor:



Tuesday, May 19

7:45 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Exhibit Fair

7:45 a.m. Registration Opens / Breakfast

8:45 a.m. Welcome

8:50 a.m. Drum Circle

9:10 a.m. Keynote

10:10 a.m. Break / Exhibit Fair

10:30 a.m. Concurrent Workshops

11:30 a.m. Lunch / Activity

1:00 p.m. Keynote

2:00 p.m. Break / Exhibit Fair

2:30 p.m. Concurrent Workshops

3:30 p.m. Break / Exhibit Fair

4:00 p.m. Keynote

5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Networking Reception

Wednesday, May 20

7:00 a.m. Registration Opens / Breakfast

8:00 a.m. Welcome

8:10 a.m. Awards Ceremony

8:45 a.m. Keynote

10:00 a.m. Break

10:15 a.m. Concurrent Workshops

11:15 a.m. Break

11:30 a.m. Concurrent Workshops

12:30 p.m. Lunch / Keynote Address

2:30 p.m. End of Conference

Keynotes

Laura D. Baker, PhD

Professor, Gerontology and Geriatrics, Internal Medicine (Winston-Salem)

Details TBA



Michael T. Zuendel

Founder, Advocate - Initiative to Change the "D" Word

"Journey of Hope"

Mike will share his personal journey with mild cognitive impairment, highlighting the challenges he has faced and the hope he has found. His keynote will emphasize that with growing progress in diagnosis, treatment, and support, Alzheimer's and related conditions no longer need to be feared but understood—and approached with optimism and purpose.



Nathaniel A. Chin, MD

Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin

Medical Director, Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center & WRAP Study

"Beyond "Just Aging": A Practical Framework for MCI, Biomarkers, and MABs"

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) sits at the crossroads of normal aging and early neurodegenerative disease. Dr. Nathaniel Chin provides a practical, step-by-step approach to recognizing and evaluating MCI, clarifying when and how Alzheimer's biomarkers can strengthen diagnostic confidence, and translating results into action. Treatment options are reviewed, including cognitive and risk-factor interventions, lifestyle interventions that support brain health, and monoclonal antibody (MAB) therapies in context—benefits, tradeoffs, eligibility, and monitoring. The session also addresses how to time supports, safety planning, and community referrals for patients and families.



Michelle Braun, PhD, ABPP-CN

Clinical Neuropsychologist, Ascension Healthcare; Author

"High-Octane Brain 2.0: Fueling Brain Vitality, Joy, and Hope Across the Cognitive Spectrum"

Discover science-backed strategies to optimize cognitive functioning, boost joy, and enhance quality of life—from the latest science on reducing the risk of Alzheimer's to practical tools that slow cognitive decline in MCI and dementia. Building on insights from Dr. Braun's bestselling book, High-Octane Brain: 5 Science-Based Steps to Sharpen Your Memory and Reduce Your Risk of Alzheimer's, and outcome data from pilot studies of the High-Octane Brain Fitness program, Dr. Braun highlights empowering lifestyle approaches that spark neuroplasticity, joy, and hope.



Khai Nguyen, MD, MHS

Medical Affairs & Innovation Community Health Accreditation Partner (CHAP)

Topic: Age Friendly**100-Level Workshops - Tuesday, May 19, 10:30 a.m.**

101: Sexuality and Intimacy in Long Term Care	Advanced	Grettchen Shimko , Regional Ombudsman, State of Wisconsin Board on Aging & Long Term Care Jessica Toscano , Regional Ombudsman, State of Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long Term Care
There is often a misconception about relationships when individuals transition into long-term care residential settings. After participating in this session, attendees should be able to discuss resident rights in residential settings, recognize the importance of relationships throughout the lifespan, and apply guidelines for assessing and determining consent for intimate relationships.		

102: SPARK!: Creative Sensory Engagement for People with Memory Loss	Intermediate / Advanced	Shelly Rollins , Environmental Educator, Schlitz Audubon Nature Center Ann Marie Craig , Adult Programs Coordinator, Museum of Wisconsin Art
Using skills you already possess, learn to design and implement creative, sensory-based engagement programs for people with memory loss and their care partners, based on guidelines established by the SPARK! Alliance. Join educators from two SPARK! Alliance institutions – art and nature – in a mini-SPARK! event, exploring different perspectives in the use of sensory stimulation and uncovering best practices for engagement while nourishing the creative spirit and encouraging feelings of accomplishment and worth in this demographic. SPARK! principles can be adapted for the home environment and for group settings. This session is hands-on and exploratory – in other words, fun!		

103: Adapting the American Indigenous Cognitive Assessment	Intermediate / Advanced	Dr. Kala Cornelius , Nurse Practitioner, University of Wisconsin-Madison Carrie Trojanczyk , Project Coordinator, University of Wisconsin- Madison Cassandra Thomas , Community Researcher, University of Wisconsin-Madison
The AMICA project aims to develop a culturally safe dementia evaluation toolkit for use with Indigenous populations in the United States, as existing tools demonstrate varying degrees of cultural, educational and language biases, and are not validated for use with Indigenous populations. The AMICA toolkit adaptation process took place with community partners from the Oneida Nation in Wisconsin, Red Lake Nation in Minnesota, and an urban Indigenous population in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This workshop draws upon		

first-hand experiences with members of the Oneida, WI research team, and explores potential applications and outcomes of the AMICA toolkit in clinical and community settings.

104: Time to Breathe: Finding the Right Respite and How to Fund It	Entry / Intermediate	Kayla Olson , Dementia Care Specialist and Caregiver Coordinator, Aging and Disability Resource Center of Dane County
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Take a breath and explore ways to identify your ideal respite care. Plus learn about grants that can help cover the cost, so you can recharge, but stress less over the financials.

105: Using CARE in our Communication: Techniques in building our Connection	Entry	Tanya Sutton , Executive Director, Senior Helpers
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Understanding how important connection through our communication can be when supporting someone with dementia can help build trust, rapport, and relationship. Using CARE (Compassion, Action, Respect and Empathy) in our interactions can foster enhanced connection. Participants will learn how communication guides us in every interaction we have with others and how it impacts care interactions. We will practice hands-on strategies and discuss real life experiences to promote moments of joy and connection.

106: Student Education: Brain Health and Advocacy for Middle and High School Students	Intermediate / Advanced	Kimberly Jaeger , Health Educator, South Milwaukee High School Josh Repovsch , Health Educator, New Berlin Eisenhower Middle School
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Brain health begins early and lasts a lifetime. This session explores how Wisconsin's Brain Health Curriculum supports wellness, mental health, and cognitive function across all ages. Participants will examine links between youth brain health education and Alzheimer's prevention, highlighting evidence-based protective factors such as physical activity, nutrition, mental stimulation, and stress management. Practical strategies and adaptable resources will be shared to apply the curriculum in classrooms, caregiver programs, older adult learning, and intergenerational settings—helping educators, health professionals, and community partners strengthen lifelong brain health and build healthier, more connected communities.

107: Everyday Fraud: Tips for avoiding scams	Intermediate / Advanced	Vanessa VanderWeele , Community Development Specialist, Kohler Credit Union
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Are you overwhelmed by phone calls, texts and emails from scammers? This workshop will help you identify the latest fraud trends, learn what to do if you or someone else falls victim to a scam, and prevention steps. Designed with both professionals and caregivers in mind, we'll cover ways to lessen the risks of exposure to fraud and how to support chronic scam victims. Get ready to become an everyday scam spotter!

200-Level Workshops - Tuesday, May 19, 2:30 p.m.

201: O'Rourke Dementia Stabilization Unit	Advanced	Crystal Noble , O'Rourke DSU Director, O'Rourke Dementia Stabilization Unit Beth Tordoff , Social Service Supervisor, Pleasant View Nursing Home
<p>What Is the O'Rourke Dementia Stabilization Unit?</p> <p>First-of-its-kind in Wisconsin: The DSU is reportedly Wisconsin's—and potentially the nation's—first dedicated dementia stabilization unit, established to support individuals with challenging dementia symptoms and their caregivers. Location and Origin: It's located at Pleasant View Nursing Home, in Monroe, WI. The unit emerged through a collaboration among four surrounding counties—Grant, Green, Iowa, and Lafayette—to create a compassionate, localized response to dementia crises. Now coordinating with a total of 18 counties. Learn about building trust, identifying triggers and interventions, and behavior support plans to assist residents in success.</p>		
<p>202: A to Z Activities</p> <p>Intermediate / Advanced</p> <p>Rebecca L. Frize, MT-BC, ADC (Music Therapist-Board Certified, Activity Director Certified), Lutheran Homes & Health Services</p>		
<p>A to Z Activities will provide participants with a supply of activity interventions and ways to adapt them for people with dementia both independently or in a group setting. This collection of interventions was put together by someone with over 20 years of experience in long-term care. Supplemental handouts will be provided electronically to all participants.</p>		
203: Bringing the Lost Home with K9 Cleo	Intermediate / Advanced	Cathleen Diedrick , Tribal Dementia Care Specialist, Forest County Potawatomi Tribe Thomas McGeshick , Tribal Law Enforcement Officer, Sokaogon Chippewa Community Troy Peterson , Tribal Dementia Care Specialist, Sokaogon Chippewa Community
<p>Our mission is to provide effective response systems and services that enable families, communities, and organizations to find missing persons and bring them home safely. When partnering with law enforcement, U.S. Military, and community leaders to implement scent discriminate K9 trailing products and response protocol services across the U.S. and Internationally.</p> <p>A key approach in achieving this mission is by developing proactive family safety measures like The Scent Preservation Kit® and helping communities focus on providing services to the most vulnerable populations with greater risk of becoming a missing person. Two vulnerable populations found in most communities are children with autism spectrum disorder and persons with Alzheimer's Disease and dementia.</p> <p>Based on recent studies, the number of individuals diagnosed with dementia will increase to 7.1 million in the USA by 2025. This is an increase of 40%. Studies have shown that 6 out 10 individuals with dementia will become lost. In Florida alone, there are over 580,000 diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease and that number is expected to grow to 720,000 by 2025.</p>		

Both Scent Evidence K9 and ourselves believe that these heartbreaking statistics are much more than just numbers on a page. We believe that every missing person is important and deserves the best resources available to search for them.

The Scent Evidence K9 vision is that every community across the country and around the world will have innovative and integrated response systems in place to find missing persons and return them to safety.

204: You Matter Too: Prioritizing Self-Care to Combat Caregiver Burnout	Intermediate	Andrea Van Dyn Hoven , Director of Business Development, Morton LTC and Morton Safety
Caregiving is an act of deep compassion—but without proper self-care, it can lead to emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion. This presentation explores the critical importance of prioritizing your own well-being while caring for others. Participants will learn to recognize signs of burnout, understand the science behind stress and resilience, and discover practical self-care strategies tailored to the unique challenges caregivers face. Whether you're a professional or a family caregiver, this session offers tools and insights to help you care for yourself—because you matter too.		

205: Conversations and Brain Change: Why Are They So Challenging?	Intermediate / Advanced	Sheri Fairman , Consultant, Dementia Care Solutions
Conversations with someone living with dementia can feel confusing, emotional, or unproductive—and there are real neurological reasons why. In this session, we'll explore the most common communication challenges, uncover the brain-based causes behind them, and learn practical, effective strategies to support better outcomes. Case studies will bring the concepts to life with real-world application.		

206: WHAT IF IT WORKS! (This is what powers me)	Entry	Tim Williams , Retired Business Owner, Advocate and Fundraiser for the Alzheimer's Association
A Cure Depends on Research. Some people with a family history of Alzheimer's may not want to know if it will impact them. But if you do nothing, you can't stop it from happening. If it could impact you at some point, I can't think of a better place to be than in a study working to find a cure. Someone from the AHEAD Study or the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at UW–Madison will share what the study is about and how to get involved. The AHEAD Study focuses on people who do not have dementia symptoms but do have brain plaques that could lead to Alzheimer's. Researchers are testing whether treating the disease before symptoms start could help delay or even prevent them. Alzheimer's is scary and is in front of Tim all the time. Tim says: "If I can help figure something out, why wouldn't I? And what if it works."		

207: Everyday Spaces, Extraordinary Living: Arranging Home Environments that Nurture Connection	Intermediate	Julia Johnson , Speech Pathologist/Dementia Care Coach, Voices Of Intention (VOI)
Creating a home that supports connection and calm is one of the most powerful ways to improve life for both the person living with dementia and their care partner. In this session, we'll explore how small environmental changes such as lighting, layout, and sensory cues can reduce stress and promote independence. You'll also learn practical ways to steady your emotions and restore focus during challenging moments. Together, we'll reimagine everyday spaces as tools that encourage participation, strengthen communication, and create stability...for both you and your loved one.		

300-Level Workshops - Wednesday, May 20, 10:15 a.m.

301: The Brain in Distress: Behavior Changes in Dementia	Advanced	Alexis Eastman, MD , Clinical Associate Professor, UW Hospitals and Clinics Division of Geriatrics
A review of the behavior changes associated with the most common types of dementia and how we can help patients in distress. Will include discussion of the current guidelines on evaluation, non-pharmacologic and pharmacologic management and some of the ongoing research and development into how we may address this in the future.		

302: Connecting With Dementia: Veteran Centered Care Through Activities	Entry	Drena Vetter , Dementia Care Specialist, Wisconsin Veterans Home - King Jordan Forseth , Dementia Care Specialist, Wisconsin Veterans Home - King Jenna Branske , Dementia Care Specialist, Wisconsin Veterans Home - King
This workshop is a hands-on learning experience focusing on Veterans who have dementia and memory loss through personalized, meaningful activities. We will be demonstrating respectful approaches, encouraging engagement, and using tools like music, essential oils, and comfort items to reduce stress and promote joy. Discover how person-centered care helps Veterans with memory loss build meaningful connections and experience more fulfilling moments every day.		

303: The Power of Connection: Purpose, Partners and Progress in a Tribal Community	Intermediate	Carrie Lindsey, BSW, CSW , Long Term Care Programs Manager, Oneida Nation
The common challenge in dementia care is working in isolation, or silos, which can lead to missed opportunities, wasted resources, and a lack of innovation. This workshop will provide participants with a practical framework for building effective connections and moving from an individualistic mindset to a collaborative one. Through the lens of the three "P's"—Partnerships, Purpose, and Progress—participants will learn how to intentionally build strong, collaborative relationships that lead to more meaningful and impactful dementia care.		

304: From Story to Care: How Life Stories Transform Future Care	Intermediate	Jennifer Graf , Senior Director of Dementia Programming, Three Pillars Senior Living Communities
This presentation empowers and instructs professionals in the use of storytelling and passions and preferences documents as tools to deepen engagement, foster trust, and tailor care plans to individual values and preferences. By encouraging older adults to share and document their life experiences and preferences, staff can enhance communication, build meaningful connections, and deliver care that truly reflects each person's identity and needs. These practices apply across all levels of support—from home care and adult day services to full residential care—ensuring personalized, meaningful care regardless of setting.		

305: Emerging Trends and Important Considerations in Elder Care	Intermediate / Advanced	Pam Foti , Elder Care Consultant, Vesta Senior Network Jenny Wagner , Elder Care Consultant, Vesta Senior Network
<p>Take an inside look at the emerging trends in elder care as a record number of Americans reach an age where they may need care to maintain safety and quality of life. Gain an understanding of the importance of understanding each individual's unique needs when it comes to care, how to finance it, and how to make decisions that are sustainable through the end of life. Learn about the "proverbial ducks" that need to be "in a row" and how to accomplish that.</p>		

306: Assessing Decision Making Capacities in Older Adults	Advanced	Victoria J. Williams, PhD , Neuropsychologist, Assistant Professor (CHS) of Medicine, Geriatrics and Gerontology, University of Wisconsin - Madison / UW Health
<p>This workshop will provide clinicians and other health care providers with both conceptual and practical knowledge and tools to enhance their ability to assess healthcare and financial decision making capacities in older adults.</p>		

307: Matching Experiences: Understanding How Our Brain's Prediction Process Can Help Us Provide Quality Care	Intermediate / Advanced	Kathryne Fassbender , Educator, Artist, Speaker, Dementia Letters Project
<p>When working with our residents and clients, we often think of "Care" or "Programming." While that is what we do, a better way to frame that work is through Engagement. It is not only for the Life Enrichment team to become relational with those we support and care for, but the job of everyone in elder care. When we use this concept of Predictive Processing to frame our engagement, we can see the engagement piece is not separate from assistance with an ADL or care task, but deeply woven into that moment. During our time together we will explore how to use the brain's reliance on prediction to inform responses to provide better care regardless of what our title and role are with the community.</p>		

308: Hot Topics in Alzheimer's and Dementia Research from Early Detection to Treatments to Risk Reduction	Intermediate / Advanced	Courtney Kloske , Alzheimer's Association
<p>Alzheimer's disease is a growing global health challenge, affecting millions and reshaping the future of science, care, and public health. This session will explore the latest advances and hot topics across Alzheimer's and Dementia research from early detection and biomarker development to emerging treatments, clinical trials, lifestyle interventions, and strategies for risk reduction. Participants will gain an understanding of the current scientific landscape and learn how progress in diagnostics and treatments is transforming care. The session will also highlight the Alzheimer's Association's leadership in accelerating research, advancing early detection, driving risk reduction, and improving care, as well as opportunities to get involved in the movement toward a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementias.</p>		

400-Level Workshops - Wednesday, May 20, 11:30 a.m.

401: Limbic-Predominant Age-Related TDP-43 Encephalopathy (LATE): Understanding a Hidden Cause of Cognitive Decline in Older Adults	Advanced	Elias D. Granadillo MD , Assistant Professor, Department of Neurology, University of Wisconsin-Madison
This session explores Limbic-Predominant Age-Related TDP-43 Encephalopathy (LATE), an underrecognized contributor to cognitive decline in older adults. Participants will examine emerging biomarkers, clinical indicators, and care implications associated with LATE. The workshop emphasizes translating current research into practical, person-centered strategies that enhance dementia assessment, care planning, and interdisciplinary collaboration.		
402: The Value of Signature Programs	Advanced	Mari Pat McAuliff , Director of Active Aging and Memory Care, Capri Communities
The focus of the presentation is the value of Memory Care Signature Programs. Signature programs are research and ability-based programs that target a specific outcome for those with dementia. I will present what to look for in a signature program, the difference between activities and programs, possible program options for communities, and how this concept can promote better marketing.		
403: "In Care Of": Telling the Story of Caregiving through Postcards and Public Art	Entry	Kristin Litzelman , Associate Professor, School of Human Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison Kristin Voss , Caregiving Advocate and Founder, Center for Caregiver Serenity
Caregiving can be hard and beautiful at the same time. In this session, we will share how caregivers talk about their own experiences of caregiving in postcard-size statements. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on the way caregiving shows up in their own life, take a virtual tour of a public art display raising awareness about caregiving, and have the opportunity to write or draw about their own moments of joy, challenge, or gratitude in caring for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia.		
404: Your (Their) Affairs in Order	Intermediate / Advanced	Joel Dettwiler , Joel Dettwiler, Financial Planner, ChSNC, Quantum Group Planners
Are your (or your loved ones) affairs in order? What exactly is needed when designing a Long Term Care Plan? Wills, trusts, beneficiaries, and assets are important to understand as well as the rules for Long Term Care Support eligibility when planning for end of life care. This workshop will present the basics of estate planning, common myths, pitfalls and successes that can come with creating an estate plan that protects you, provides care for your loved ones, and secures a lasting legacy for your family.		

405: Navigating the Journey: The Role of Palliative Care and Hospice in Dementia Management	Intermediate	Miranda Uhen, DNP, APNP, AGPCNP-BC , Director of Palliative Care - Wisconsin, Empatia Palliative Care Peg Dettlaff, MBA , Hospice Care Consultant, Heartland Hospice
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This workshop will discuss the appropriate time frame for accessing palliative care and hospice during the journey with dementia, helping participants understand when each type of support becomes beneficial. Participants will learn to describe the key distinctions between hospice and palliative care, covering the details such as eligibility criteria, the interdisciplinary care team, services provided, coverage and costs, and duration and location of care. Furthermore, attendees will gain the ability to recognize when palliative care services may no longer be sufficient to manage symptom burden, and a conversation regarding end-of-life care and hospice referral is necessary.

406: Living with Grief Associated with Dementia: What it's like and how to help	Advanced	Tania Riske , Speech-Language Pathologist, Mayo Clinic Health System - Eau Claire Tom Sather , Professor, University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire CeCelia Zorn , Care Partner, Community Member
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This presentation explores experiences of grief within the dementia journey—for individuals with dementia, care partners and healthcare providers. Drawing from lived experiences, clinical insights, and reflective dialogue, presenters explore specific concepts of grief including anticipatory, ambiguous, and disenfranchised grief, highlighting how these ongoing losses differ from traditional bereavement. Participants will learn to recognize gaps in services, identify helpful versus unhelpful responses to grief, and apply compassionate, practical strategies that foster emotional well-being. Designed for those already familiar with broad concepts of grief, this session promotes understanding, presence, enhanced insights and comfort amid the evolving grief that accompanies dementia's progression.

407: Beyond Memory: Spiritual Wellness and Dementia	Entry	Robert Best , Program Manager, Serving Older Adults, Inc.
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Spiritual wellness is essential for holistic health. For people with dementia, spirituality can help reduce anxiety, increase hope and meaning in life as well as maintain social interactions and foster a sense of connectedness. This presentation will explore the importance of spiritual well-being during the third age of life and discuss ways to help people with dementia achieve a sense of spiritual wellness.