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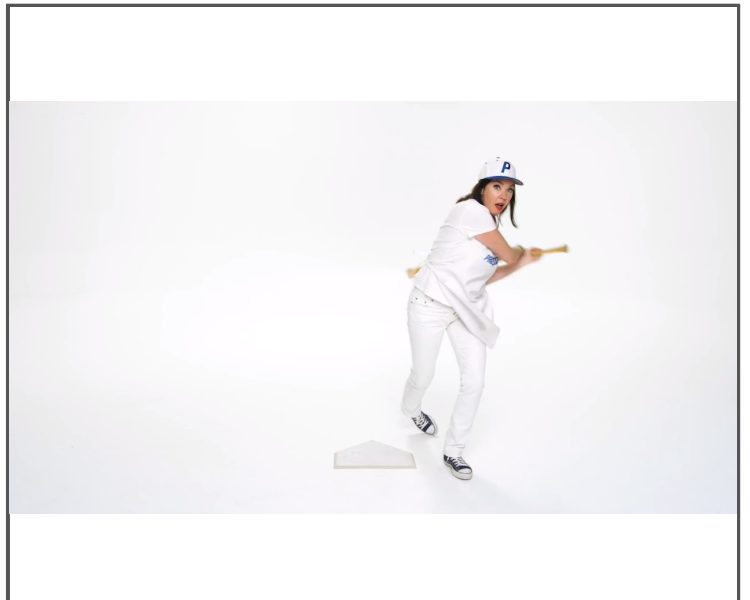


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Dialogue about dementia

 STAFF WRITTEN /  MAY 23, 2019 /

 [NEWS \(HTTPS://MORGANCOUNTYCITIZEN.COM/CATEGORY/NEWS/\)](https://morgancountycitizen.com/category/news/)

By Sarah Wibell

staff writer

Mary Jo Johnson-Gibbons, who facilitates a monthly support group at First United Methodist Church for caregivers of people with dementia, is providing opportunities for people in Morgan County to learn more about dementia and resources through five events, the second of which was held on May 9. The free hour-long talk focused on how to preserve the personhood and identity of a loved one with dementia and shared Johnson-Gibbons' own experience caring for her father

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who lost his ability to speak verbally early after his diagnosis. As a Certified Dementia Practitioner and Certified Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Trainer with a Masters of Public Administration, Johnson-Gibbons spoke from more than just a personal background on the subject.

"There is an increasing prevalence of dementia," Johnson-Gibbons stated. "One in three people knows someone with dementia, and one in 10 are related." Her goal is to change the tragedy narrative around a diagnosis of dementia – of which Alzheimer's is the most common subcategory – without diminishing the impact of it, and finding another way to respond to it by embracing those special moments to connect with a laugh, a look, or a hug.

Finding ways to honor and respect the identity of those with dementia, allowing them to be able to make some choices for themselves, letting them use the abilities they have, and making sure they can express their feelings, verbally or non-verbally, were key points made during her talk for the preservation of personhood and which aim to prevent or reduce social isolation.


In September, Johnson-Gibbons will provide a virtual dementia tour available to members of the community who are interested in learning what it is like for the person dealing with dementia.

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