

Film screening, discussion to focus on Alzheimer's disease

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"The Genius of Marian" is a feature length documentary which explores the heartbreak of Alzheimer's disease, the power of art and the meaning of family.

A screening of the film is scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 24 at the New Bedford Art Museum in a partnership between the museum and Community Nurse Home Care.

The film follows Pam White in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease as her son, the filmmaker, documents her struggle to hang on to a sense of self. By investigating this disease in a warm, poetic and deeply personal way, "The Genius of Marian" is an ideal tool for education and advocacy, a press release from the museum states.

The free screening will begin at 5:30 p.m.

Director Banker White, approached this film both as a loving son and as a patient observer. Pam White is his mother. She is a loving parent of three children, a devoted friend, a steadfast partner to Banker's dad Ed, and a gifted clinical social worker, a synopsis of the film states. But, as she puts it, "There's just one little glitch." In 2009, shortly after her 61st birthday, she was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease.

For the next three years, Banker recorded both the big events and the small details of his family's changing reality. He filmed his parents recounting stories of how they met and fell in love. He captured his mother's delight at the birth of her grandchildren. But he also documented the slow erosion of his mother's ability to dress and feed herself, her waning independence, and her fierce resistance to accepting help from professional caregivers.

"I had no idea how much I needed to see 'The Genius of Marian,' said Chris Riley, family caregiver for mother Diane, diagnosed with Alzheimer's and FTD in 2009. "It helped me feel less alone and to remember that Alzheimer's is not a death sentence, but a chance to connect in a new way."

In "The Genius of Marian," a family's story is depicted with intimacy and honesty, "offering audiences a chance to connect to and identify as they navigate the changes Alzheimer's has brought. Although the film is candid in depicting the challenges of family caregiving, its message is ultimately uplifting," the release states.

"Over 15 million caregivers provide unpaid support for the 5.4 million people in the United States who are living with Alzheimer's disease. 'The Genius of Marian' has the power to shift the way we understand caregiving and Alzheimer's, setting the stage for important conversations about how to cope with and care for this growing population."

"'The Genius of Marian' is by far the most meaningful representation of a family's experience with this disease that I've seen (and I've seen a few)," said Susan Rowlett, manager of care consultation and clinical education for the Alzheimer's Association Massachusetts/New Hampshire Chapter. "Its value as a conversation-starter for families and caregivers cannot be overstated."

After the film screening, guests can stay for an expert panel who will discuss end-of-life issues and answer audience questions. The panel will include certified dementia practitioner Carol McAfee LPN, Alzheimer's advocate/caregiver Barbara Meehan, Executive Director of the New Bedford Art Museum Ashley Occhino and social worker Christine Rider .

The New Bedford Art Museum is located at 608 Pleasant St. CEU credit available for nurses. To register or for more information contact Community Nurse Home Care at (508) 717-0736.

