



The Critical Role of Dementia Care Volunteers—Plus a New Certification

[National Volunteer Week](#), which is being celebrated April 17-23 this year, is a great time to remind volunteers of how valuable they are to your organization by demonstrating your appreciation for all they do.

Established in 1974, this annual celebration “is an opportunity to recognize the impact of volunteer service and the power of volunteers to tackle society’s greatest challenges, to build stronger communities and be a force that transforms the world.”

Points of Light is the organization behind National Volunteer Week and

it underscores how volunteers serve in a wide variety of roles, providing support in a myriad of ways to help those in need: “Today, as people strive to lead lives that reflect their values, the expression of civic life has evolved. Whether online, at the office, or the local food bank; whether with a vote, a voice, or a wallet – doing good comes in many forms, and we recognize and celebrate them all.”

Volunteers are critical members of healthcare teams and organizations, supporting patients and families in the hospital and at home, as well as residents of long-term care facilities and their families. In this vital role, volunteers can help to enhance quality of life for those they serve and help ease the load of healthcare workers. An important type of work in this context is supporting those who have been diagnosed with dementia.

A Critical Role

According to the Alzheimer’s Association, 50 million people worldwide are [living with Alzheimer’s disease](#) and other forms of dementia. This number is [expected to increase](#) in coming years, creating a growing challenge for those affected by dementia, their families, and the healthcare professionals and others who care for them. That’s why volunteers who work in settings that support individuals with dementia fill a critical role by helping to meet a variety of needs.

To help them be even more effective in this role, research indicates that volunteers benefit from receiving proper dementia education. A [recently published study](#) “illustrated the importance of quality volunteer training and voluntary service in improving the dementia knowledge

and attitudes of volunteers. It also shed light on the association between knowledge and attitudes with the levels of motivation to volunteer.”

The study also cited additional research that described positive outcomes associated with the work of volunteers in this context:

- “...shorter lengths of stay in acute hospitals were found among patients with dementia who received person-centered care from volunteers that focused on nutrition and hydration support, help with hearing and visual aids, activities, and orientation”
- “In the community and long-term care settings, people with dementia were also found to have benefited from volunteer-administered non-pharmacological interventions”
- “The benefits of including volunteers in the care team are not limited to people with dementia but also extended to their caregivers. Family caregivers and hospital staff reported reduced stress and burden when volunteers were integrated into the care team providing person-centered care, and stated the contribution of volunteers to their quality of care”
- “Apparently, volunteers can improve the outcomes of both people with dementia and their caregivers, especially in systems with scarce resources”

Referring to the study as “one of the first studies to evaluate the impact of volunteer training and voluntary services on the dementia knowledge and attitudes of volunteers,” study authors said, “The results showed that the volunteers’ knowledge and attitudes towards dementia had improved after the provision of training and services. ...”

A New Certification for Volunteers

Recognizing the importance of training and education for volunteers who are serving individuals with dementia, the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners (NCCDP) recently announced a new certification: Certified Dementia Volunteer® (CDV®).

A [February 28th press release](#) announcing the certification emphasized the importance of education and training: “Volunteers are the heart and soul of an organization. To maintain a successful volunteer program, it is paramount for healthcare organizations, associations, senior centers, religious organizations, and government agencies, to bring meaningful educational opportunities to their volunteers. A quality Volunteer program thrives when its volunteers, (who engage with elders who have a diagnosis of dementia), are well prepared and educated. Volunteers are then empowered, confident and equipped with the necessary tools to provide the best quality service.”

The release also described the critical support volunteers provide: “Volunteers enhance organizations who provide services in the home, hospice care, hospitals, long term care communities, memory care neighborhoods, dementia units, senior centers, religious groups, or community outreach programs, homeless programs, etc. Volunteers working with elders with a diagnosis of dementia, provide all types of important services such as calling bingo in an assisted living community, participating in religious services, providing activities in a secure memory care unit, pet therapy, assistance at disaster sites, delivery of meals, sitting at the bedside of a hospice patient, and so

much more.”

Noting that many volunteers “lack any kind of Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia Care training and Dementia certification...,” the NCCDP said it now “offers a distinct certification for this incredible and indispensable group of people who selflessly give of their time. The new certification is called Certified Dementia Volunteer® (CDV®).”

The announcement notes that after completing the “live and interactive NCCDP Alzheimer’s disease and Dementia Care comprehensive seminar,” volunteers can then apply for the new credential.

Topics in the ADDC seminar—presented by certified CADDCT Certified Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia Care Trainers—include “understanding aspects of the dementia diagnosis, types of dementia and symptoms, recognizing depression, communication changes, repetitive questions, challenging behaviors, intimacy, recognizing abuse, supporting the caregiver, elopement risks, and spiritual care,” among others.

According to [SeniorsMatter](#), Sandra Stimson, CEO of NCCDP and a certified Alzheimer’s and dementia care trainer, told the publication that staff and volunteers who work with seniors don’t always get the Alzheimer’s or dementia care training needed to instill confidence and ensure that care and support are provided in an appropriate manner.

“Volunteers are the backbone for many organizations, and they need to have the same comprehensive dementia education that is offered to other staff,” Stimson said.

For more details about the new certification program, please [visit the](#)

Marketing Your Organization's Expertise

In addition to the benefits for those impacted by specialized trainings and certifications such as these, they are also important tools in your marketing toolbox.

Patients, future residents, and families who need care and support are looking for healthcare providers who understand the unique needs of individuals who have been diagnosed with dementia and are specifically trained to provide appropriate, individualized care.

If your organization offers specialized dementia education and training for your staff and volunteers, be sure to include that information in your marketing offerings so prospects can more easily find the services—and providers—they can trust.

[Contact us today](#) to find out how we can help level up your healthcare marketing strategy.

By [Katlyin Battiste](#) | April 12, 2022 | [Blog](#)

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