



June 4, 2020

Meredith Hanley, Director
Dementia Friendly America
1100 New Jersey Avenue SE
Suite 350 I
Washington DC, 20003

RE: Village of Oak Park Submission for Dementia Friendly Recognition

Dear Meredith:

Oak Park, Illinois has made significant progress over the past 12 months towards becoming dementia friendly. Together, going forward, our Oak Park team will continue to develop resources to better serve our community and maintain the progress that we have already made. To achieve a dementia friendly Oak Park, community programs and policies will be put in place to ensure the safety and inclusion of our residents through education, awareness and advocacy. Based on our outlined efforts, as contained within this letter, Oak Park asks that we be considered a part of the Dementia Friendly America Communities Network. Before we outline our significant efforts to date, the Village of Oak Park and the other members of Oak Park's Dementia Friendly Action Team, want to thank you for your consideration of our request.

Introduction – As the Village of Oak Park's population ages, local leaders have recognized a need to improve awareness, regarding dementia, within the community. On February 20, 2018, the Oak Park Village Board approved the establishment of an Aging in Place Commission. One of the first actions of the Commission was to recommend to the Village Board the pursuit of a dementia friendly designation. In early 2019, the Village's Aging in Place Commission voted to recommend to the Village Board that Oak Park become a dementia friendly community. On June 17, 2019, the Village Board of Trustees officially supported the Village's Aging in Place

Commission's recommendation that Oak Park work towards achieving a dementia friendly community designation.

Since the Village Board's action, the Village of Oak Park has partnered with other Oak Park taxing bodies including the Oak Park Township, Park District of Oak Park and the Oak Park Public Library. Together, all four taxing bodies are working together to make Oak Park a dementia friendly community and to form the foundation of Oak Park's Dementia Friendly Action Team, which has grown to include several organizations across a variety of sectors.

Community Kick-Off Event – A large dementia friendly community kick-off event was held on October 17, 2019, to bring the public and community leaders together to learn about and discuss dementia and its impact on Oak Park. More than 80 individuals from various sectors attended this event. Dr. Raj Shah, Associate Professor of Family Medicine with the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center and a leading expert on dementia friendly communities in Illinois, gave a keynote address. Dr. Shah focused his remarks on the importance of communities recognizing and developing policies to support people with dementia. Small discussion groups gathered to share their input on the importance of creating change in Oak Park and to brainstorm on "next steps." Additionally, a local caregiver shared his personal experiences with the audience about the joys and trials of caring for a loved one with dementia. The community kick-off meeting created the momentum needed to bring individuals together to begin enacting change.

Dementia Friendly Initiative's Vision and Goals – Since its beginning, the Oak Park Dementia Friendly initiative has not slowed down. Utilizing the Dementia Friendly America community toolkit, an action team was created and the vision and goals for the initiative were outlined. A list of the initiative's vision and goals are listed below.

Oak Park's Dementia Friendly Initiative - Our Vision

The Dementia Friendly Action Team aims to increase the overall quality of life for all Oak Park residents, both now and in the future, by focusing on providing sustainable person-centered change that allows for continued engagement in the community for those impacted by dementia.

Oak Park's Dementia Friendly Initiative - Our Goals

- Reduce stigma by raising the level of understanding and acceptance of what it means to live with dementia in our community, through education and awareness.
- Reduce social isolation by increasing awareness of programs tailored to the needs of those impacted by dementia.
- Implement programs to address identified gaps in support.
- Create a safe and respectful community by increasing awareness about dementia and training local businesses to offer dementia friendly customer service in their commercial space.

- Ensure our first responders are adequately equipped to address the needs of those impacted by dementia by providing sensitivity and awareness training to better support their ability to interact with and service this population.
- Provide a platform for those impacted by dementia to share their experiences and guide the community's actions to make meaningful change.
- Work to engage all sectors of our community to be dementia friendly, including, but not limited to, businesses, communities of faith, healthcare organizations, institutions of learning, financial institutions, and other aging-related service providers.

Champion Organizations and Coordination Capacity – Oak Park's initiative is led by the Village of Oak Park and championed by the following three additional local taxing bodies: 1.) Oak Park Township; 2.) Park District of Oak Park; and 3.) Oak Park Public Library. All four champions coordinate events and meetings and work together to ensure the management of the initiative. Each champion has committed time, staff and resources to the dementia friendly initiative, with two of our champions hiring full-time interns to ensure the necessary time and attention are devoted to seeing our vision become a reality.

Connecting Across Sectors – Oak Park is proud to announce that it is not only our champions who are committed to seeing change implemented in our Village but we also have multiple partners who represent businesses, organizations and individuals. Our partners are from a variety of different sectors (Education, Healthcare Across the Continuum, Residential Services, Local Government, Senior Support Services, Restaurants, Individuals and Caretakers Impacted by Dementia, and Invested Residents). Approximately 50 individuals, from the sectors listed above, make up Oak Park's Dementia Friendly Action Team. The action team holds monthly meetings. This format is designed to bring people from different sectors in the community together, to discuss and help implement change. Our partners work together to ensure that collaborative, community-driven and person-centered change is occurring in Oak Park.

Inclusion and Leadership of People Living with Dementia – Oak Park's efforts focus on creating meaningful change for those impacted by, and living with, dementia. To ensure our efforts are person-centered, we have implemented practices to guarantee our initiative is guided by those living with dementia and those personally impacted by dementia.

The Oak Park Action Team recognizes that individuals living with dementia may not want to be publicly acknowledged. Therefore, in order to respect their privacy, the action team has implemented alternative methods to record their perspectives, in order to help guide the initiative. Oak Park has conducted several one-on-one interviews with both individuals living with dementia as well as their caregivers. These interviews have allowed our initiative to identify the community's existing strengths and weaknesses, regarding being dementia friendly. In addition, we have utilized the interviews to help us identify areas that need to change in order to increase the quality of life for all residents living with dementia. This personal approach has allowed Oak Park to identify the day-to-day needs of our community members so that we can ensure that we are creating supportive environments that will allow these individuals to prolong

their independence. Other efforts to include the voices of those living with dementia include speakers who have shared their experiences with the action team as well as caregiver support groups who will speak at events later this year to raise awareness of the impact of dementia on the community.

Adoption and Communication of Dementia Friendly Practices and Change Goals – Our initiative has set goals which it hopes to achieve in order to see a change in the community. Several steps have already been taken with additional steps planned for the future to ensure the sustainability of our project.

Adoption of Practices - Training of Businesses, Public Servants and Community Members

Online Video Training Series – One of our bigger projects of this initiative has been the creation and dissemination of sector-specific business online training videos that we will utilize to train businesses remotely. These online videos are a resource we hope to share with other communities as they seek designation. We have sent out over 1,500 flyers to all of the businesses in Oak Park to increase awareness about these free online trainings and to get the businesses signed up to participate. Businesses that complete the organized training will be provided with a window decal to show their participation in this effort as well as to increase awareness of dementia in Oak Park.

Free In-Person Training – Our local libraries, government, township services, businesses, and members of the public will all have access to the videos as well as the in-person training, which has been provided since we began in October 2019 and will continue to be offered. Currently, we have several community support services that have signed up to receive in-person training, including senior living, healthcare, and financial institutions. On March 6, 2020, the public library staff will be receiving both sector specific in-person dementia awareness training as well as dementia live simulation training to best prepare them for interacting with people living with dementia. We have several certified dementia awareness trainers on the action team who will offer in-person training to all organizations that request it, free of charge. As our initiative grows, we hope to see more and more of our organizations continue to receive training and increase the number of businesses, organizations, and members of the public who can consider themselves dementia aware.

First Responder In-Person Training – In February of 2020, we launched a full training series for first responders that provided not only general awareness training, but also a full training model specifically created for our first responders. It offered specific skills and best practices for our Fire Department, who also serves as EMTs, and our Police Department. This series provided examples and scenarios that are experienced daily by our first responders to make sure our training provides relevant information and skills to ensure the safety of those living with dementia in our community. All of our first responders have officially

been trained in dementia awareness and are set to complete the next step of the series, the dementia live simulation training, in the first weeks of March.

Adoption of Practices - Programs Tailored to People Living with Dementia

Oak Park recognizes its aging population and has been ensuring programs and services are available to allow individuals to successfully age in place. These services include an emergency ID bracelet program, snow shoveling services, rehab loan programs, money management services, future planning services, in-home respite care, transportation assistance, meal delivery, caregiver support groups, etc. Many of these programs are tailored specifically to individuals impacted by dementia and a few have been highlighted below for your information.

Emergency ID Bracelet Program – This program was developed by the Village of Oak Park Police Department and aims to allow officers to reunite individuals who are confused or involved in an emergency situation with a caregiver or loved one. The green emergency ID bracelet makes it easy to identify individuals who may be experiencing distress or disorientation in emergencies. It allows police personnel to quickly access relevant medical and emergency contact information. The bracelets are free and do not display any sensitive personal information, but they provide the officer with an ID number as well as any immediately relevant information the family members had placed on the bracelet. As mentioned previously, all Village first responders are undergoing dementia friendly training.

The Memory Café – This program is hosted by the Township on a monthly basis, to provide individuals living with memory loss and their caregivers a safe space in the community to connect, share a meal and enjoy recreational and educational opportunities. Oak Park's memory café has been so successful and well-attended that two additional entities are also set to host a memory café so that this important service can be provided even more regularly.

Film Viewings – These are no-shush film viewings, where all ages and abilities are welcome to watch movies at the local theater. These viewings provide an opportunity for those impacted by dementia and their loved ones to enjoy an outing without fear of disrupting other moviegoers.

The Memory Kit Program – This program has been implemented by the Oak Park Library. This interactive program provides a Memory Kit, which can offer mental and emotional stimulation, and is based on themes including gardening, I Love Lucy, and travel. These kits aim to inspire conversation and build stronger connections between those living with dementia and their loved ones. Memory Kits are available in the Main Library and can be checked out for up to three weeks at a time.

Communication Practices - Advocacy and Awareness

Decreasing stigma and raising awareness are two other big components of our action plan. In order to address these, we have held several events at the Village of Oak Park Village Hall where residents and businesses can receive in-person training. We will be setting up awareness booths at various community events and are publishing our efforts via several different media outlets and the extensive use of social media.

Emergency ID Sign-up Days – Sign-up events have been held at our local memory café and are scheduled to occur at community senior living facilities. These sign-up days advertise the program as well as provide an opportunity for the Police Department to speak with those impacted by dementia. This program is one of many aimed at ensuring we are creating resources and programs that are tailored to the needs of our community.

“A Day in Our Village Event” – This is a very popular community event where thousands of residents experience a fun-filled day and enjoy all that Oak Park has to offer. For this event, we will be setting up a booth to offer resources, advertise programs, and provide opportunities for those who are impacted by dementia. This booth will create an opportunity for those living with dementia to participate in a volunteer program that is aimed at improving awareness and reducing stigma.

Dementia Awareness Displays – The Oak Park Library will be hosting displays for the month of March at its main and secondary branches. Books that provide information about dementia, discuss experiences of living with dementia, and that can provide support and assist in explaining dementia to children, will be displayed. Along with these books, there will be flyers promoting all programs and services that are targeted towards seniors and those impacted by dementia.

Communications – We have published our efforts in a variety of formats to spread awareness not only about dementia, but also about how our community can become involved in both local and national efforts. We have had several articles published in local newspapers, newsletters, and magazines, and will continue to do so. We have created a website to provide resources and information to the public to share and constantly update our residents about our efforts as well as programs and services available. We have created videos to advertise our programs and are hoping to soon create a promotional video about Dementia Friendly Oak Park to show how our community has worked to implement change.

Progress and Tracking - Oak Park’s Dementia Friendly Action Team meets once per month and is charged with ensuring we identify areas that require change, as well as formulating an action plan to address these areas. As mentioned previously, the action team created an action plan that is currently being implemented. The action team continues to track the progress of the developed plan and also continues to evaluate each accomplished task. This action team is led by the Village of Oak Park and the three additional taxing body champions, as previously mentioned. The steering committee and is supported by the Village of Oak Park’s Aging in Place Commission. This set-up allows for each group to ensure progress is being made, at both a community level and an administrative level.

Request – As stated at the start of this letter, Oak Park has made significant progress towards becoming dementia friendly. Based on our outlined efforts, contained herein, Oak Park asks that we be considered a part of the Dementia Friendly America Communities Network. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
VILLAGE OF OAK PARK


Cara Pavlicek
Village Manager