



Collabria Care
We're here for you

Fall 2021

Connection



See story on page 6

Beth and Frank: A Love Story

Sometimes, a story is so good on its own it doesn't need to be written, just shared as is. Starting on the next page is the correspondence between Veronna Ladd, our Day Program manager and Frank Brezel, whose partner Beth has attended our Day Program. It offers an inside look into caring for a loved one with dementia and how our person-centered Day Program can be a resource for both our clients and their caregivers.

Below we've included Frank and Beth's story, as shared by Frank. We thank them for sharing this with us.



Beth and I have a love story that spans decades, and for almost a decade now, she's had dementia. She was easily the smartest person in any gathering we were in, but never displayed it overtly. That intelligence was one reason I found it so hard to accept her cognitive impairment, but it may be why she's still so functional. I have also never seen her cry: not with injuries, not at sad movies, not during her one daughter's struggle with cancer or her death, and not now.

But once I recognized how much Beth was slipping into the mists of dementia, I cried—a lot: several times daily for months before this more halcyon time where I accept (and rarely cry about) who she is now and what she now has to offer...and that it's inevitable that she will slip further away.

I want people to know that our relationship is not some Hallmark movie—we've had to work on it—but despite the challenges that dementia has created, I don't love her less or more than before, just differently. I know that someday when she is with the angels, they'll have someone to look up to.

I've known Beth for 32 years. We met while working in mental health for Napa County, and for the first ten years, were professional colleagues and supporters. Beth was in a long-term relationship, but she and her significant other split up in late 1998. On July 2, 1999, I delivered a report to her office, and she invited me to walk to the chef's market downtown. We sat down to enjoy a glass of wine and she looked at me and said, "Why aren't we in love?" Rather than answering her I invited her to dinner. By the end of summer, I was ready to acknowledge that I was in love with her. Over the next few years, my house became our house, and one of her daughters moved into her house.

In 2010, I recognized something wasn't right. Reports that had taken her 30 minutes to fill out before were taking 3-4 hours. I knew something was wrong, but I didn't believe that she had cognitive degeneration. Then she got lost on the two-mile drive from our house to the gym, and while walking our dog at the River Trail. She stopped walking the dog in our own neighborhood when she got disoriented and ended up at her old home.

In 2012, she underwent all sorts of assessments and a brain scan. In 2013, she had another scan—we could clearly see the loss of brain tissue. The doctor said one word, "Dementia."

I hired a home health aide to watch Beth while I ran errands or went to the gym, and that worked well. But one night, she began what I now know was sundowning. She wrapped the leash around the dog's neck and insisted she was taking him for a walk. I blocked the doorway and called her daughter because there was no talking her out of it. Her daughter was still at work, but her husband came and together we got Beth to relax and go to bed.

Our home was too small to bring in 24-hour care. Her daughter and son-in-law offered to have her move in with their family. They found a larger house where there would be enough space for the whole family.

These days, I bike to that house to spend an hour with Beth every day. She doesn't say my name, but she smiles and laughs and holds my hand. We listen to music. Beth talks, but what she says often doesn't make sense. That's ok—she's still communicating.

I am still learning from her, and trying to be as compassionate and smart as she was and is. She has always been focused on being helpful to those anyone who was hurting. In fact, her ultimate rebuke was, "That's not helpful."

One of the wonderful things about the Day Program for Beth was that it allowed her to do something she was so very good at and loved to do, pre-dementia: to be helpful, rather than be helped. It also allowed her to have brief interactions with people she did not have to be close with—it kept her from the isolation that is common to so many with dementia.

The Day Program's focus on participants as individuals makes it an invaluable program, and its staff touched our lives in many ways. I am grateful for all they do.

Beth and Frank: Love in the Time of Dementia

*Howdy Veronna,
Yesterday, the activities bag for Beth from Collabria was dropped off. It included a binder of pictures of birds. There was a note attached that said that Beth liked looking at the book. How long shall we keep it? Thanks for your connection.*
- Frank

Hi Frank,
It's great to hear from you! The bird book was something that our activity bag team thought Beth would like and it is hers to keep. If you know of anything that Beth might enjoy receiving in future activity bags, PLEASE let us know. We are dedicated to individualizing the bags as much as possible so your feedback is truly appreciated.
-Veronna

*Hi Veronna,
Thanks for your prompt reply. There's no special activity I can ask for at this point. I spend an hour every day with Beth, but most of the time is spent with her expounding a two- or three-sentence delusion to which I grunt an assent to and then she says another...which has no connection to the previous one or the one that will follow. We interrupt that flow by my avowal that I love her or adore her or respect her or appreciate her (all of which I really do); then she smiles and says assuredly, "I know." Maybe we hug and then she proceeds to say with great earnest feeling more gibberish. So...I don't do any other activity with her. However, Melissa and her granddaughters may have some ideas. I'll check with them.*
- Frank



Veronna Ladd
Collabria Care Day Program Manager

Hi Frank,
What you clearly described is what we call "word salad." We know that in her mind, there is clear emotional and/or intellectual information that she is expressing. It just doesn't come in the form of connected sentences we're used to. I've noticed one of her favored activities is to talk with people. I'll bet she was an excellent Social Worker!

We now know it's more important to connect and help her understand that we are connecting rather than trying to make sense of words and sentences. And when she does come out with words that connect to what she is wanting to express, that's a wonderful moment, too. Continuing to tell her you love her is always good. I miss seeing the deep affection that you have for one another. I love the "I know." You are doing so well on Beth's journey and keeping up with her changes. Keep doing what you're doing, allow her to be as independent as it is safe to be, and enjoy each precious moment with that lovely lady! Feel free to check in any time Frank. Best to you, Beth and your family.
-Veronna



Hi Veronna,
Let me add a clarification to my prior email. (By the way, both Beth and I did work with some severely mentally ill folks when we worked at Napa County, and we got full exposure to some of the best word salad.) Beth's "delusions" are most of the time perfectly constructed sentences; the content is delusional. They tell in two or three sentences something that an unspecified "he" did or is ready to do, or something that her mother had an opinion about...a few minutes prior to the utterance. I used "gibberish" as a general term for what she says, but there sometimes are nonsense terms mixed in with the English words. My favorites are "to go to go to go" and "like-a-like-a-like-a" and "munchy-punchy." Sometimes, my grunting replies sound like "Oh, I totally agree with that" or "Is that what your Mom thinks". And it doesn't matter if it connects to what she said or not. She smiles and moves on to the next delusion. And then I drink in her smiles and laugh and give thanks for what she offers — thoughts and looks and an amazing brain that is doing wonderful, mysterious acrobatics despite the challenges of missing neurons.

Thank you for your support of what I do, and what the Morrises and Beth's incredibly devoted and competent home health aide do.

-Frank

Hi Frank,
I didn't realize that you had so much experience with people who have verbal responses like Beth. No wonder you are so good at communicating with her. My favorite line of yours.... "I drink



"And then I drink in her smiles and laugh and give thanks for what she offers — thoughts and looks and an amazing brain that is doing wonderful, mysterious acrobatics despite the challenges of missing neurons."

in her smiles and laughs and give thanks for what she offers — thoughts and looks and an amazing brain that is doing wonderful, mysterious acrobatics despite the challenges of missing neurons." I just love that!

I've attached some photos of our "best-looking couple" from the other day's performance by the Strays.

-Veronna

Hey Veronna,
Thanks for photos. I think the looks part is all Beth, but we both contribute to being the happiest couple when we're dancing. And thank you for booking the Strays. It's now the only time I can share them with Beth because she won't sit and listen at their other venues the way she did up to a few years ago.

(PS: "My Girl" is one of the Strays' regular numbers. When they play it anywhere but Collabria, it hurts my heart because it reminds me that my "girl" isn't there to share the song with me.)

-Frank

Oh Veronna,
It was so joyful to see you and everyone at Collabria at the drive-by visit! I savor your note and photos of us dancing as a way to prolong the moments when Beth got to see you and you got to see how delightful Beth is (most of the time) these days. I have forwarded your email to Beth's daughter and to Dave Dunlap of the Strays so that they can have a taste of what Beth and I enjoyed.



Thank you for all the effort put in to make it a happy experience for us and for the others who took advantage of how wonderful everyone at the program is, even in a version modified to adapt to the pandemic. Please convey my appreciations to your colleagues.

Warmly,
-Frank

Keeping Connections Strong

The Mind Boosters Program

While socialization is vital to mental health for everyone, it's especially helpful as we age, as it can help prevent mental decline and lower the risk of dementia. Collabria Care's Mind Boosters program is a community program for those who may be in the early stages of memory loss and those who want to be proactive in protecting their brain health.

According to her daughter Barbara Willard, Kay Meihaus can strike up a conversation with anyone, a skill honed by a life filled with family, travel, volunteer work and a love of people and conversation. At 100 years old, she no longer travels the world, but she's found an enjoyable outlet for maintaining her social as well as other cognitive skills through Collabria Care's Mind Boosters program.



In 1945, Kay married her childhood sweetheart Jack. Jack, as an enlisted soldier in the Navy during World War II, finished medical school training at Indiana University School of Medicine in 1945. Only days after their wedding, Jack and Kay were sent to a Navy base in Norman, Oklahoma, so Jack could complete his Internal Medicine residency.

It is here they had their first son, John Jr., who would become the first of eight children. After the completion of his medical residency in 1947 they moved to Los Angeles area to be closer to Kay's sister Marguerite and to start up Jack's new Internal Medical practice. Jack was honorably discharged from the Navy in January 1955.

Jack and Kay loved to travel in their spare time. "We traveled to Europe and Hawaii, many times," says Kay. Many of these trips were cruises. "We took cruises to Alaska, along the Mississippi River, many to the Caribbean, and even through the Panama Canal, always accompanied by family or friends." Their greatest memory was a trip aboard the Queen Elizabeth 2 (QE2) in 1994. Her beloved Jack died in February 2000.

"She loves to talk with people, was always so interested in what they were doing and just about themselves," says Barbara. "So, when Mom moved from southern California into our home in Napa in 2017 we wanted to make sure she found a connection to her new community, something to be involved in, and a fun reason to get out of the house."

Despite COVID 19 setbacks over the past couple of years, Collabria Care's Mind Boosters program has continued to provide Kay ways to stay in touch through social networking and Zoom conferencing.

"It not only enriches her social, mental, physical and cognitive skills," says Barbara, "but most importantly, offers the opportunity to socialize, reminisce, and laugh with friends, just as did when she was younger. She greatly enjoys being actively involved in the program and looks forward to the day they can all get together again in person."

Is Mind Boosters Right for My Loved One or Me?

Mind Boosters is for people who may be in the early stages of memory loss and want to be proactive in maintaining their brain health.

Mind Boosters offers:

- Techniques to enhance memory
- Activities that offer mental stimulation and socialization
- Learning tools and techniques to assist with daily living
- Physical activities and exercise
- Support and encouragement

To learn more contact Sami Rogers, MSW, at 707.258.9087

Planting the Seeds of Philanthropy

From their eight-acre plot of land, Megan and Grant Long, and their children—ages seven and five—have turned a family project into a full-fledged philanthropic endeavor.

Megan and Grant started a garden as a way for their kids to learn the responsibilities of planting, tending, and harvesting. The garden evolved with the addition of chickens and fruit trees, and the family built a farmstand to sell the bounty. That in turn became another valuable life lesson: giving back to the community.

“We decided to donate the proceeds to community nonprofit organizations,” explains Megan, “and have the kids use the *Napa Valley Give!Guide* as their research resource. Each time we’ve made \$500 in sales, the kids choose an organization to donate to. We’ve supported nine organizations so far, mostly focused on kids, families, and animals, but recently my son said, “I want to donate to older people who need help. So we went through the *Give!Guide* and he picked Collabria Care for our next donation.



"To us, the importance of role modeling a commitment to hard work is just as important and rewarding as teaching our children to share what they have with others, particularly in the community that they call home," says Megan. "Knowing that the food we grow and eat is also enjoyed by neighbors who frequent our farmstand and makes donations to our local community possible, is really the icing on the cake."

It's Never Too Early to Plan for the Future!

Last month we celebrated National Estate Planning Awareness Week and as such, we'd like to encourage you to take some time and ensure you have an up-to-date plan! Nearly 70% of American adults don't have a will, but it's an essential way to protect the people, pets, and organizations you care about.

We've partnered with FreeWill to provide you with a secure online tool to help you create your will, at no personal cost. If you have a simple estate, you can print your legal will to be signed and witnessed. If you have a complex estate, we suggest you use FreeWill as a planning tool to document your wishes so you can finalize your plans with your attorney.

You can also use FreeWill to leave an optional legacy gift. Legacy gifts to Collabria Care ensure that our hands-on care will be available for future generations and cost you nothing today. For those who do chose to make a gift and notify Collabria Care, we look forward to welcoming you into our Legacy Society.

Get started now at FreeWill.com/NAPAHospice



“I've chosen to make a Legacy gift to Collabria Care in honor of the compassionate group of people there who provided remarkable care to my husband. They so richly deserve this heartfelt expression of gratitude.”
– Jan Hayden

Collabria Care's Dementia-Capable Napa County Helps Others Navigate Dementia

Sylvia Ceja and Yuliana Trujillo, OLE Health



Almost 20% of Napa County residents are 65 or older, resulting in a large portion of our population being at risk for conditions like dementia. The Napa County Navigator Training offered by Collabria Care gave us several tools and strategies for identifying patients who have (or are at risk of developing) dementia, communicating with them, and connecting them to specialized resources and services.

As referral coordinators for OLE Health, it's our job to connect our patients to the medical services they need, whether at OLE or elsewhere in the community. By understanding how to interact with those who have dementia we can assess and refer to the appropriate resource.

Through the Napa County Navigator training we learned:

When talking or working with someone with dementia, it's important to meet them where they are. Those with dementia are often controlled by emotions, so it's important to start any conversation from where they see things, not where you see it, and to always show and maintain compassion.

There are a number of non-brain conditions that can impact brain health—but treatment of them can prevent or slow the onset of dementia. For example, sleep apnea has been linked to a higher risk of dementia. The pauses in breathing restrict oxygen flow, which can cause brain damage—it literally forms holes in the brain. But treating the apnea can reverse that damage. Being aware of conditions like these, we can address a condition the patient might not realize can have a serious effect on their brain health.

Brain health is not just an issue for those over 65. About one in seven over age 70 will be diagnosed with some form of dementia, but it's not just the elderly whose brain health is at risk: 40% of those over 50 report some form of memory problems, too.

There are services available here in our community to help those with memory-related conditions and their loved ones, and that need is only going to grow. In just the next four years, the percentage of Napa County residents 65 or older will jump to 28%, so in addition to making referrals to patients, we're getting the word out on these with staff, physicians, and our own friends and family.

You Can Be A Dementia Hero, Too

Over the last year, Collabria Care's DCNC has trained more than 200 community members, including first responders, healthcare providers, caregivers, and community members in how to understand dementia, reduce the stigma surrounding it and provide support and assistance for those with (or at risk for) dementia.

Anyone in the community, from individuals to small groups or organizations, is welcome to attend our free 60-minute weekly Wednesday workshops (hosted on Zoom). These cover how to recognize when someone might have dementia and how to communicate with them, strategies for approaching and caring for those with dementia, and local resources.

A 90-minute class (with CEUs) is available for first responders, healthcare professionals, social service providers, and those who work primarily with older adults.

For more information about Napa County Navigator trainings or community workshops, contact Melissa Gerard at 707.815.6258 or mgerard@collabriacare.org

A Joyful Celebration to Be Remembered!



It was called Joy: A Week of Celebration, and joy there was! For the first time, and due to the unique circumstances of our times, our annual gala and golf tournament were bundled into a single week along with an elegant luncheon, and a live and online auction, creating an exuberant week of celebration and palpable joy. It was visible on the faces of our generous donors and sponsors—friends who had not seen each other in years, loving the opportunity to get together to celebrate life while supporting a great cause.



Thank You to Our Golf Sponsors



While things may have looked a bit different with protocols in place for everyone's safety, the theme was visible throughout the week, and evident in these photos – unmitigated joy.

Once again, your shining generosity raised an impressive \$565,000—funds that will be used to support Collabria Care's core services such as compassionate Palliative and Hospice Services, award-winning Collabria Day Program/Center Without Walls, and Person-Centered Alzheimer's and Dementia Care. We are so grateful for your continued support and for the enormous impact it has on some of the most vulnerable people in our community.



Thank You to Our Gala Sponsors



Morgan Stanley

THE DOLAN AND ENGEL GROUP
AT MORGAN STANLEY



Sponsor Spotlight

Camie Bianchi, Your Home Nursing Services

I'm so pleased to sponsor the Palliative Care program that Collabria Care offers our community.

When you're dealing with a chronic illness or disease, or a long-term health condition that affects your day-to-day life, palliative care can help make every day more of a blessing than a health burden. If you struggle to find to new ways to manage your symptoms and enjoy family and friends, Collabria Care's Palliative Care team can offer a comprehensive approach for better days ahead.

Both of our agencies share a commitment to improving the quality of life of our community. With Collabria Care Palliative Care creating the care plan and Your Home Nursing Services providing supportive assistance, each day can become something to value rather than another day to get through.

I started Your Home Nursing Services 32 years ago, and our caregivers offer a full range of services, from homemaking to caregiving to skilled nursing care. And unlike other home care agencies, ours is run by skilled nurses.

Collabria Care Palliative Care address not only a patient's physical needs, but their emotional, social and spiritual needs, as well. Many of these services that are integral are not reimbursable, so donor funding is crucial to keep palliative care available in our community.

Palliative Care is just one of the wonderful services that Collabria Care has to offer our community and it's an honor to work with their team.



Let Us Help Coordinate Your Care

Coping with or caring for someone with a serious illness can be a lot to undertake: the medical appointments, the medications, the paperwork, the unexpected visits to the Emergency Room all can be overwhelming and stressful. Palliative Care can be very effective in alleviating symptoms, making the patient more comfortable, and addressing problems at an early stage so they don't become emergencies.

Our Palliative Care team partners with you and your caregiver to:

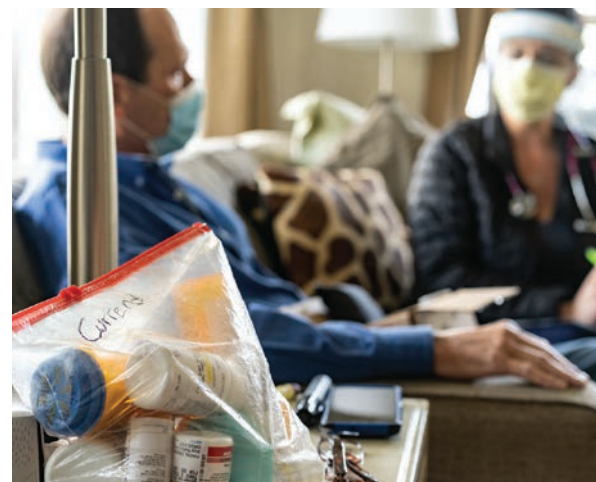
- Develop a plan of care with you and your doctor.
- Create a care team to assist and support you. Depending on your needs, this can include a registered nurse (RN) or nurse practitioner (NP), a medical social worker, our Medical Director who is a medical doctor with specialist training, and if there is need/desire, a volunteer to assist or a spiritual care provider can be made available.
- Provide an RN or NP who is always available 24/7 for consultation.

If you or a loved one:

- have a severe illness that requires complex care, multiple doctors, or medications
- are struggling to understand what options you have for care or where to get it
- have difficulty understanding the instructions your doctor gave you

We can help.

Please call us and ask for a Palliative Care consultation. 707.258.9080



Upcoming Support Groups & Community Programs

Alzheimer's/Dementia Monthly Education Series – Ongoing

Four classes each month, meeting 1:30 – 3:00 pm every Wednesday via Zoom

Week 1: Dementia 101

Helps participants understand the difference between normal and abnormal memory changes, best approaches to care for Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia, and helpful resources available in the community.

Week 2: Learning to Speak Alzheimer's

Shows caregivers how to focus on the whole person—not just their symptoms or disease—and helps attendees say or do the right thing at the right time, while providing ways to manage their own self care through emotional reframing and helpful community resources.

Week 3: Challenging Behaviors

Shares many ways to understand and connect warmly with combative loved ones, outlining steps towards soothing difficult moments and reinforcing positive emotions for loved ones and caregivers alike.

Week 4: Self-Care for the Care Partner

Helping caregivers help themselves, our class “Self-Care for the Care Partner” provides ways to manage stress, to set realistic goals, to seek collaborative solutions, to ask effectively for help, and to reframe negative emotions and self-talk into positive, healthy action plans

For more information or to register, visit collabriacare.org/edu

Grief Support When You Need It Most

Hope for the Holidays

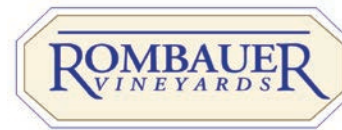
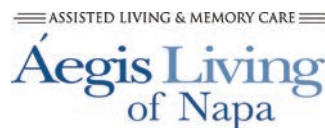
The holidays can magnify the stress of having lost someone you love. Learn about the many dimensions of grief as well as specific strategies for managing holiday traditions and gatherings. This program is particularly valuable to those who may be facing the holidays without their loved one for the first time, and is designed for adults.

These workshops are free and open to all however registration is required. Please visit collabriacare.org/hope for dates and locations, and to register.

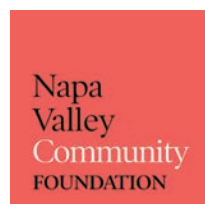
THANK YOU

We are deeply grateful to all our donors and sponsors who fund our important community programs. Thanks to their generosity we are able to provide them at no charge.

Thank You to Our Annual & Program Sponsors



Thank You to Our Community Partners



For information about current sponsorship opportunities please contact Kate Bunnell at 707.732.1811



Collabria Care
We're here for you

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Light Up a Life

WHO IS YOUR SHINING STAR THIS HOLIDAY SEASON?

- A loved one no longer with us*
- A family member or dear friend*
- A Day Program or Hospice team member*
- A first responder or neighbor*
- A beloved pet*

Honor your Shining Star by making a donation at:

collabriacare.org/light-up-a-life

Visit our lighted outdoor display at:

Collabria Care
414 South Jefferson Street
Napa, CA 94559

December 3 - 30, 2021

