

Testimonials and Client Stories Opening Minds through Art (OMA)

“The program is such a God sent for my husband”. He comes home after every OMA days with renewed energy considering that it is already end of the day. His mood is changed and it makes things a lot easy for me. – Club 36 HH OMA client caregiver.

“My dad is so proud of his art work. Through OMA, his social skills have improved. Whenever we have a guest at home, he shows his artwork with great enthusiasm and his experience with his student partner. My dad used to be quiet so seeing him come to life again, even just for a short period of time, gives us a glimpse of who dad really is – OMA client’s caregiver

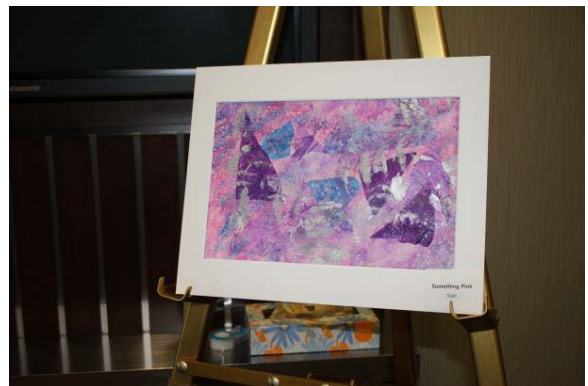
My experience with OMA allowed me to develop a great sense of empathy for elderly in general but more for people living with dementia. I am forever grateful for all the knowledge and skills that I gained through my OMA; I feel empowered to do great things and make a difference in my future nursing practice/career. – University of Calgary Nursing Student



Club 36 collaborated and continue to be in collaboration with University of Calgary Nursing students for Seton and Harvest Hills location. The impact of OMA to the clients is very powerful –build their confidence and their quality of live is improved such decreased social isolation and improved mood. Caregivers of clients involved with OMA expressed improved quality of life and decreased burden of caregiving – Club 36 staff

“It has been a positive experience for me to accompany Jean on her OMA journey. I find it rewarding to be with her as she has the opportunity to build new relationships and experience creativity at the amazing age of 91. For several years I was my husband's care partner after his Alzheimer's diagnosis. It became obvious that this, or any life altering illness, causes an individual's world to shrink as his or her capabilities and social relationships decline. OMA encourages and makes possible a way to counteract this.” – Sue Singleton (OMA Volunteer)

“Volunteering with the OMA program at the Glencoe has been rewarding and fun. Each week I look forward to being part of a happy group that is enjoying the hour we have together. Our artists are inspirational and love the time we have together. It is amazing to see the pieces they create. The program is very well run and our artists are inspired to try something a little different in each session.”
– Adrian Ruitter (OMA Volunteer)



JANE ROSS, BKin, CSEP-CPT, FMS2

"I am so pleased my mother is a part of OMA, seeing the difference from before she was part of OMA to how she is now, makes my heart melt, thank you so much!" Family Member

"I can't believe someone actually bid on my art piece, especially the Administrator!" (Note: The resident continues to share her positive experience with co-residents, staff and family members).

"I look forward to seeing my partner weekly! She makes me feel like an artist!"

"Did you see my art piece? I called it La Rose"

"It's nice to paint trees again" a former artist.



Kayla Doiron RecT
Bow View Manor

This project has been a great opportunity, not only for the students, but also our artists to learn and grow in our own unique way. Again, we are thankful and honored to be a part of the OMA project. "

Earl Mervin Castillo, 2nd year nursing student
Red Deer College

What we have learned is that in dementia care we cannot underestimate the "hidden creativity" that is still intact in spite of the cognitive decline. We may need to revisit what we truly mean by quality of care. How can we nurture the soul and the spirit as we care for others?

The artists were engaged, they chatted with the student, they smiled, and at times frowned, but something was stirred – a memory or a feeling perhaps, as they searched within and gave their own work a title.



The art had purpose as you could see from some of the pieces displayed at our final art show to be auctioned off. An artist's family expressed that they were awestruck by what their loved one had created even if the sessions were not remembered as such. "How precious to have something beautiful that mom made in the midst of her dementia journey".

The students have expressed how they are learning to communicate, and that being quiet and just listen is highly valued in the relationship they are building; to let go of their own uncertainty and anxiety in how to respond to a person living with dementia. They are learning to "Go with the flow", as the outcome is measured by a positive process of being present in the moment instead of a predictable product.

Halle

One of the residents in the program is a low functioning resident who did not often speak. She became alive in the OMA program. Specifically, at the art show she held up one of her pieces and talked about it to her peers.

One resident is very quiet and quite isolated. After week two she began to remember her artner. When her artner would come onto the unit her face would light up. At the art show she talked about how she loved her volunteer.



Brentwood Care Centre partnering with students from Alberta Bible College

What were your favourite parts of the OMA experience?

"At the Art Gala, I really appreciated the expression of gratitude from family members. That made a huge impact on me. It made the difficult times, as I learned to communicate with my partner, all worth it."

"My partner had a background in arts, and used to enjoy doing graphite pencil drawings. He showed them to me when I brought him back to his room. I thought that was really interesting, as I enjoy doing graphite pencil drawings. It was neat to see that we had things in common."

"It was rewarding to watch my partner relax each week, and begin to share more, communicate more, and show me more of her sense of humour. She came a long way in conversation over the weeks."

"My partner would really look forward to our time together. It was neat to see her anticipation, and see her so happy."

What were the most challenging parts of the OMA experience?

"On my first day I worked with a couple who spoke Spanish. Communication was difficult."

"Keeping people on track was harder than I expected."

What impact has OMA had on you?

"It was a very valuable experience."

"At first I thought, 'Oh this will be fun, doing art with seniors!' But that's not what OMA is about. It's not us doing the art. It's us helping someone else do the art. It's not a playgroup."

Was the Dementia Education you received prior to starting OMA valuable for your experience?

"Yes! The video about the brain and how the disease affects the brain was helpful in understanding the disease."

When asked about their first impression of walking into the facility:

"I adapted over time. At first I was mortified and thought it was so sad seeing all the people in wheelchairs, but over time I realized that this is their home, and the more I interacted with them, the more I realized the good times we could share."
