

# CREATIVE CONNECTION

The Remember Project Newsletter



## Staying Connected

Danette McCarthy, Founder - [dmccarthy@rememberproject.org](mailto:dmccarthy@rememberproject.org)

Ten years ago, I had not yet encountered “Steering into the Skid,” - a one act play entered into a competition hosted by an organization I led for seven years (St. Croix Festival Theatre). Had Debby Percy and Arnie Johnston NOT entered that competition, it is unlikely that I would have come to know the anthology of three award-winning MemoryCare Plays, which led to the birth of The Remember Project.

A lot can happen in ten years. A lot has happened in ten years!

Some have heard me lament, with a bit of awe, that it took a pandemic for me to imagine what a virtual version of The Remember Project might look like. I remain in awe that a small and tenacious team seemed to appear at the right time to help imagine and create the virtual version of this project.

Jim Pounds had been with the project since we auditioned actors for our Fall 2015 pilot tour in the St. Croix Valley. Molly O'Connor had only introduced herself to me via LinkedIn in late January 2020. Rachael Cady and I had gone to college together, though we had no opportunity to work together over the three decades that had passed by. I didn't know Hannah Robb at all, but the pandemic cut short (before it had barely begun) her semester abroad in Germany and I was fortunate to be asked to provide her with a full-time internship so she could graduate on time. And then there's Brian Bethune. We had intersecting arts administration lives in the late 90s while working in Toledo, OH, but had not kept in touch. Suddenly Brian was on my radar because he was mentioned in an email as I was trying to reschedule a Minnesota State Arts Board (MSAB) site visit with Zorongo Flamenco Dance Theatre. Go figure!

It will always amaze me that the six of us, meeting virtually and regularly, created an entirely virtual version of The Remember Project. With unending gratitude to MSAB and the Minnesota Legislature, we produced three theatrical videos in COVID-safe studio settings and delivered the Dementia Awareness Tour, which received funding for the 2020-21 season through an Arts Tour Minnesota grant. In fact, we delivered 63 virtual events and reached over 3,000 people in this manner.

Last summer, we began to deliver live events once again, while continuing to reach audiences virtually through new and expanding partnerships. Indeed, 2022 was very rewarding, as you'll read later in this issue. Looking to our history as we also look to our future is especially important. I am deeply grateful to everyone who has been part of this journey – artists, partners, and audiences alike. We look forward to staying connected!



# 2022 Impact

27

Partner Organizations

32

Events  
23 Live, 9 Virtual

65+

The average participant's age

2,295

Event participants

### ENGAGEMENT:

99%

Of Remember Project event participants had a good or great experience

### GATHERING:

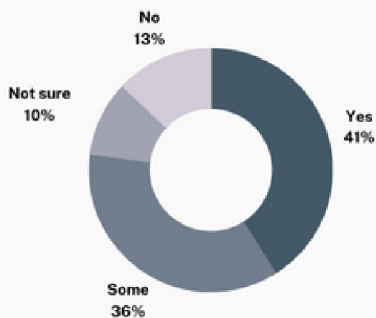
100%

Of virtual events were hybrid, offering the choice to participate virtually or gather at an in-person viewing site



7 OUT OF 10

participants see some evidence of dementia-friendliness in their community - and note there is work to still be done



### DEMENTIA AWARE

41% of participants have a strong understanding of the differences between normal age-related memory loss & dementia

## Participant Feedback

The Remember Project creates awareness about the worried well and how to talk about dementia.



The discussion held after the play enriched the whole program. People openly talked about their experiences with dementia. This was helpful to all.



The play was superior. I could so easily put myself in the character's position, and the facial expressions, timing, and actions of the actors were phenomenal. While it was painful to watch because the content was so true, it oddly helped me feel less alone.



I would like to be able to watch this play again.



The caregivers in attendance were an inspiration!



I certainly gained a better understanding of how people are affected by memory loss. We need more dementia education like this; interactive learning that keeps us engaged. Love it!

# Participant Feedback

I really appreciate that Mona said to her son, "I am afraid."



What really stood out to me is the importance of having the conversation with our loved ones.



All of us will be touched with this diagnosis at home or work, in the community, or personally. Talking now expands the ability to better manage later.



I valued the parts of the discussion that described differences in perception of the characters (for example: some people perceived Amanda as very patient and creatively supportive whereas others found her to be impatient and perhaps exacerbating tensions). I'd have loved to see what happened if the differences of opinion were shared among people attending and how they might have sat in the difference. The difference of opinion and how we work to support the greater good in the midst of it is so critical in the situation of supporting people with dementia and their care helpers, as well as society as a whole.



Thank you for offering this virtual play and conversation. I wouldn't have been able to attend any other way.



**1 TO 3**

Participants personally know 1-3 people who are living with dementia

**UNDERSTANDING:**

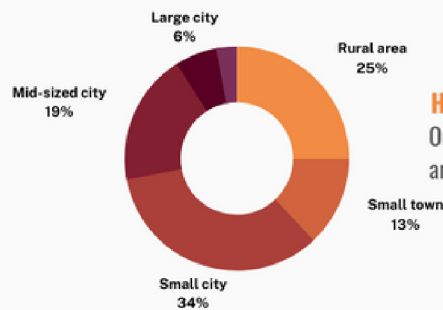
**89%**

Of participants have an increased understanding of memory loss as a result of participating in a Remember Project event

**FRIENDS:**

**98%**

Of participants would recommend The Remember Project to others



**HOME**

Our participants live in towns and cities of all sizes.

**1**

Theatrical video added to our repertoire: "Mango Songs" by Alia Jiraj

**1**

Satellite performance company created in Central Wisconsin

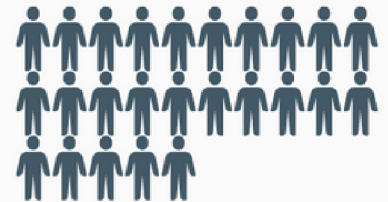
**HIGH IMPACT:**

**87%**

Of participants felt the community conversation elevated their Remember Project experience

**25**

Professional theatre artists affiliated with The Remember Project





## The Remember Project Partnership with NEA Big Read in the St. Croix Valley

[BigRead-Fortune2023.eventbrite.com](https://BigRead-Fortune2023.eventbrite.com)

In partnership with the 2023 NEA Big Read in the St. Croix Valley, The Remember Project will present four live events featuring "Fortune Cookies" by Bonnie Dudovitz. The tour will take place:

- Wed, April 19th, 2-3:30 pm, Family Means Caregiving & Aging, Stillwater, MN
- Thur, April 27th, 2-3:30 pm, River Falls Public Library, WI
- Sat, April 29th, St. Croix Falls Public Library, WI
- Sun, April 30th, Bayport Public Library, MN

Tickets are free and registration is required for the events.

NEA Big Read in the St. Croix Valley is presented by ArtReach St. Croix and core program partners including Valley Bookseller, Stillwater Public Library, End in Mind Project, The Remember Project, and other library branches located between St. Croix Falls, WI and Hastings, MN. NEA Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.

The 2023 NEA Big Read in the St. Croix Valley book selection is "Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?" by New Yorker cartoonist, Roz Chast. Leanne Sponsel, a Friend of The Remember Project offers her review of Chast's memoir.

### The Review: "Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?"

In "Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?" Chast implies a variety of strategies for interacting with people who have dementia; but more importantly, she repeatedly touches the heart and heartache of this situation. Chast discusses her own parents and the journey the three of them go on as her parents age and dementia becomes part of their world. She does an exquisite job of describing her parents' idiosyncrasies and capturing the changes that take place over time. As one reads, it is possible to be sympathetic to both Roz's struggle and her parents.

Chast doesn't hold back in sharing the hard stuff: her parents' unwillingness to talk about long-term plans (her own unwillingness, too); the uncharacteristic grime of her parent's unkept home; her father's excessive worry; and her mother's overbearing manners. She tells about care facilities and the multiple struggles that all families face but never see coming. Yet, she manages to blend in messages of trying to connect; moments that are extremely tender; times of feeling helpful; and her experiences of saying goodbye.

While reading Chast's novel, I was amazed at how she captured the challenges that family members face as parents age - with wit and wisdom. A good read.

Enjoy a beautiful, witty play and join in community conversation about the importance of brain health and aging.

