



# Advancing Dementia Friendly Community Initiatives in Georgia

A Final Report of Five Grant  
Projects Awarded by the  
Georgia Gerontology Society

October 2019

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## **I. Introduction**

Led by the Dementia Friendly America (DFA) initiative, communities across the nation are taking action and becoming dementia friendly. A dementia friendly community is informed, safe, and respectful of individuals with dementia and their families and provides supportive options across the community to foster quality of life. DFA communities are working across sectors (such as with partners in health care, business and banking, legal and financial, faith communities, local government and more) to ensure they are friendly places for people with dementia and their caregivers to live. Every part of the community has a unique role in a dementia friendly community. DFA communities are building on a model developed by Minnesota's ACT on Alzheimer's and the dementia friendly communities in Minnesota. Dementia Friendly America is made possible by a national collaborative with over 35 national organizations. Dementia Friendly America is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and was launched at the 2015 White House Conference on Aging.<sup>1</sup>

In June of 2018, the Georgia Gerontology Society released a request for proposals to advance dementia friendly initiatives in Georgia by supporting community efforts in planning and implementing and phase of the Dementia Friendly Communities Toolkit. The toolkit guides communities through a research-informed process that fosters adoption of dementia friendly practices in all parts of community. The toolkit is designed to be flexible and adapt to fit a community's needs and complement other project management processes. The four phases are: Convene, Engage, Analyze, and Act.

### **Phase 1- Convene**

Convene key community leaders and members to understand dementia and its implications for your community. Then, form an Action Team.

### **Phase 2 - Engage**

Engage key leaders to assess current strengths and gaps in your community using a comprehensive engagement tool.

### **Phase 3 - Analyze**

Analyze your community needs and determine the issues stakeholders are motivated to act on; then set community goals.

### **Phase 4 - Act**

Act together to establish implementation plans for your goals and identify ways to measure progress.

You can find more information on the four phases at <https://www.dfamerica.org/community-toolkit-introduction>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dfamerica.org/>

In September 2018, five grants of \$2,000 were awarded to fund five organizations leading the dementia friendly effort in their communities:

1. Alzheimer's Outreach Center
2. Orchard Senior Living
3. DeKalb County Human Services
4. Hospice of Northeast Georgia Medical Center
5. Northwest Georgia Regional Commission

The grant period was from October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019. Enclosed is a report from each grantee summarizing their efforts to help their communities become more dementia friendly. These grants were made possible through funds provided by the GA Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services. If you would like to connect with the project managers for more information, please contact the GGS Executive Director at [administrator@georgiagerontologysociety.org](mailto:administrator@georgiagerontologysociety.org).

## **II. Alzheimer's Outreach Center**

The Alzheimer's Outreach Center (AOC) spent the contract year collaborating with the SOWEGA Council on Aging, Area Agency on Aging (COA) presenting information to the community in order to create a dementia friendly environment for those dealing with all forms of dementia. We began by creating a Focus Group to identify individual concerns regarding dealing with dementia which met in January 2019 at the COA. One area of concern prioritized at this meeting was creating dementia friendly businesses.

The dementia friendly business meeting was scheduled for May 2019 at the Merry Acres Event Center in Albany. We contacted the Albany Chamber of Commerce and got a mailing list of 1280 businesses in the Albany area. We mailed postcards to these businesses. We invited staff from the Albany Memory Clinic at Phoebe Putney hospital to come and present briefly on their plans for the clinic. We had attendees from banks, churches, doctor's offices, hospitals, construction companies, and others. We provided information on being a dementia friendly workplace and offered to come to their individual businesses and present programs on dementia. Although lots of interest was expressed on participating in on-site programs, we did not get any scheduled. We recognize a need to do more follow-up contacts.

In June 2019, COA hosted a community meeting at the Albany Center on Dementia presented by Kathy Tuckey, a Dementia Training Specialist. We continue to plan future events with COA. Currently, we are planning a Dementia Friendly Community Session which will include assistive devices and a virtual reality presentation. We are also planning a Dealing with Dementia community training which will be held at the COA. Although this grant has ended, we continue to plan activities together to meet needs. We would like to strengthen the Focus Group we started and prioritize more issues identified by the group.

### **III. Orchard Senior Living**

#### **Activities**

Orchard at Brookhaven spent October, November, and December of 2018 becoming acquainted with and getting to know businesses, religious organizations, city officials, and the Chamber of Commerce for the City of Brookhaven. We shared the mission/vision of the soon to open assisted living as well as our desire to serve as an aging and dementia resource to the city's residents as well as the goal of partnering with the city to implement a dementia friendly initiative.

In December 2018, we began planning a Community Conversation breakfast event to take place in February 2019. The intention of the gathering was to raise awareness about the need for support for persons and families living with dementia, to educate the community at large about what it means to be “Dementia Friendly”, and to bring together various stakeholders from the city of Brookhaven that could contribute their experiences, ideas, and interest in furthering the pursuit of the initiative for the city.

The event was promoted publicly as well as through continued personal invitation. We announced the event on the Orchard website, in the Brookhaven Blast city list serve email blast, as well as through an article that was printed in a local community newspaper publication shared throughout DeKalb County. We also invited the grant recipient team working on the DeKalb County focus group to join us or extend invitations to persons who could further their efforts as the City of Brookhaven is in DeKalb County.

Attendance to the community event included approximately 60 participants with a mix of stakeholders from the community. We had representation from Brookhaven City Council, Brookhaven Police Department, Brookhaven and DeKalb County senior living service professionals, spousal care partners, city agencies, a variety of for-profit business professionals, and two persons living with dementia; one of which shared publicly about her experiences.

The event included a welcome, introductions, acknowledgement of GGS and DHS funding for the event, announcement of DeKalb County focus group opportunities, explanations about Dementia Friends and Dementia Friendly America, video clips, presentation and slides shared by Dr. William Hu, small group discussion and feedback facilitated by Dr. Hu, and closing invitations for next steps.

Feedback from attendees was outstanding; especially the interest of Brookhaven Councilman and Pro Term Mayor Joe Gebbia. During the small group feedback, Gebbia shared publicly Brookhaven’s success in becoming the first City in the state to implement Governor Deal’s “Georgia’s Not Buying It,” - a statewide program to prevent the sex trafficking of young girls and boys.

The councilman felt passionate about pursuing the dementia friendly initiative for his city and expressed confidence that the infrastructure was in place to make the effort a reality based on their previous success with the sex trafficking initiative.

Following the February 2019 event, Councilman Gebbia requested Dr. Hu present to his Chamber of Commerce in an effort to further establish interest from its members. He reported that at February's council meeting, he shared his new knowledge and interest in pursuing a dementia friendly initiative, and then publicly issued the challenge to his colleagues to become the first City in Georgia to accomplish this.

In March 2019, several meetings were scheduled for the planning of a follow up event with the Brookhaven Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of soliciting further interest from key city stakeholders.

The Chamber Breakfast event took place in May 2019 and was sold out with 50+ participants. The event included a welcome from Robin Andrews Smith, a presentation and challenge to chamber members from Dr. William Hu, and in closing, Councilman Gebbia publicly announced a "Resolution for commitment to support and incorporate dementia friendly actions by organizations within the City of Brookhaven".

The event followed with a final meeting to discuss goals and next steps. These included but were not limited to partnering further with DeKalb County for funding, creation of a city educational criteria for businesses and public organizations to complete, design of a decal for acknowledgement of business participation, and utilizing Dementia Friends GA Information Sessions to raise awareness throughout the city.

Councilman Gebbia feels passionate and confident the next step efforts will continue due to his previous success with the cities "Georgia's Not Buying It" initiative. He intends to use the same format for the purposes of expanding the Dementia Friendly Brookhaven initiative and will lead this effort with the support of DeKalb County Human Services. A meeting to discuss county support and funding possibilities for the city initiative is scheduled for October 2019.

### **Valuable Discoveries**

We found that having a "subject matter expert" to speak on the topic was valuable to getting attendees to come to our events. We also found that utilizing pre-existing relations and infrastructures of both the Orchard at Brookhaven Assisted Living and the City's Chamber of Commerce gave us a platform for outreach to individuals and organizations in the community to address the need for conversation on this important topic. Finally, we wanted to note that for both events, we had limited RSVP's and responses to flyers alone. We determined due to the subject matter, personal invitations were needed and necessary for event attendance to further conversation and interest in the initiative.

## IV. DeKalb County Human Services

The dementia friendly grant project for DeKalb County in partnership with the Dementia Spotlight Foundation utilized grant dollars to host four focus groups throughout the county, print 400 Dementia Friends Workbooks, and send two of the Office of Aging case managers to attend the Virtual Dementia Tour and seminar. Funding added much value as the focus groups were offered at county facilities at no cost and expenses were low and included refreshments for participants and a few materials. The printed Dementia Friends workbooks are being used in our next phase in partnership with the Dementia Spotlight Foundation to offer Dementia Friends Information Sessions throughout DeKalb County to community participants and county staff including Human Services and Public Safety staff. Finally, the grant enabled us to send two Office of Aging case managers, who work with many clients living with dementia and caregivers, to the Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT) as well as a special seminar focused on VDT discussion and practices.

The focus groups were the initial part of the project and enabled us to gather feedback and insight about dementia in the community, how it affects caregivers and people living with dementia and the role of our community and whether our community is dementia friendly and/or what we need to do to move toward becoming dementia friendly. The four focus groups were located in: 1) the city of Decatur at the Recreation Center 2) North DeKalb senior center in Chamblee 3) South DeKalb senior center in South DeKalb on Candler Road and the 4) Lou Walker Multi-purpose senior center located in the city of Stonecrest. Focus groups were held from February to April 2019, with approximately 40 participants including people living with Dementia, caregivers, and a few community leaders from the Atlanta Regional Commission and State Department of Human Services, Division of Aging in attendance. The focus groups were facilitated by a social worker, Whitney Oeltmann from the Dementia Spotlight Foundation, and a person living with Dementia, Robert Bowles, who is living with Lewy Body Dementia. Both facilitated the discussion and went through eleven questions to prompt discussion.

1. Do you feel the community is well informed about dementia?
2. Do you feel your community does a good job in supporting people who are living with dementia?
3. Do you feel your community understands your role as a care partner?
4. What do you want your community to know and understand about people living with dementia and/or about caring for a loved one living with dementia?
5. Have you ever had a bad experience in your community where perhaps you felt lost or confused and no one seemed to help? For care partners: any experiences where you needed extra support but no one helped? What happened? What could have made the situation better?
6. Do you think your community treats you differently, or would treat you differently, if they knew you had dementia?
7. Are there adequate opportunities for family care partners to stay involved and enjoy community life? What is something the community could do/offer that would help you in your role as a care partner?

8. Do you think there are enough opportunities for people living with dementia to stay involved in community life? What do you see as the biggest obstacles to staying involved in your community?
9. What care partner/caregiver resources would you like to see in your community?
10. If I could wave a magic wand and make your community a great place to live for both those living with dementia and/or those caring for someone with dementia, what would it look like?
11. What is the most important thing your community could do over the next year to better meet your needs as a care partner or person living with dementia?

### **Focus Group Feedback/Results**

We had two wonderful Georgia State University interns from the Gerontology Institute who helped us facilitate, handled logistics, took notes and transcribed notes for all four focus groups. In fact, both became certified Dementia Friends Champions and will be offering Dementia Friends Information Sessions in the DeKalb community.

Whitney Oeltmann is the founder and Executive Director of the Dementia Spotlight Foundation as well as a social worker and has personal experience with Alzheimer's within her family. She led the focus group discussions and partnered with Robert Bowles, who is living with Lewy Body Dementia, as an assistant facilitator. Robert was invaluable as he works with Whitney and offered his personal experiences which prompted good discussion.

After completion of the four focus groups, we took all the transcribed notes and found similar issues and concerns from the participants in order for us to foster a dementia friendly community. We convened a larger meeting at the Central DeKalb Senior Center in September 2019 and included Dr. William Hu as he reviewed our results and gave us feedback on why it is critical to create a dementia friendly community. We also included staff from Human Services who work with DeKalb seniors.

### **What We Found**

1. Dementia education is needed throughout the community
2. Lack of understanding of various types of dementia
3. Better diagnostics and treatment
4. Trouble with and fears of leaving the house
5. Limited opportunities for PLWDs and care partners to stay connected with the community:
  - a. Lack of access to senior centers
  - b. Loss of employment
  - c. Friends drifting away after diagnosis
  - d. Loss of mobility

### **Next Steps**

1. Implement dementia awareness campaigns across the county
2. Educate our community by holding Dementia Friends Georgia Information Sessions

3. Offer accessible services such as respite care, transportation, and medical care
4. Establish support groups to include people living with dementia and care partners, e.g. Memory Café at Lou Walker Senior Center
5. Create volunteer opportunities for people living with dementia to work within the community to decrease social isolation

## **V. Hospice of Northeast Georgia Medical Center**

The Beyond Dementia Coalition in Gainesville convened 10 regular meetings and 2 strategic planning/mission development workdays since the receipt of the grant funding. The focus of the coalition's effort has been on meeting the following goals, objectives, and aims.

**Goal 1:** Convene additional sectors of the Gainesville community, including persons living with dementia and their care partners, as members of the Beyond Dementia Coalition to develop a plan for future actions for dementia friendly initiatives.

**Objective 1.0:** Expand the membership of the Beyond Dementia Coalition to include persons living with dementia, care partners, and key stakeholders from other sectors.

***Aim 1.1: In two months, using the existing infrastructure of the Beyond Dementia Coalition, we will expand the Coalition to include a minimum of two persons with dementia and their caregivers/care partners.***

Coalition members recruited four care partners of persons with dementia and two persons with dementia to join the coalition who attend coalition meetings on a regular basis.

***Aim 1.2: In eight months, recruit members of the faith, business and governmental sectors to join the Beyond Dementia Coalition.***

The coalition membership expanded to include a nurse from a long term care facility in Gainesville, one clergy member, a licensed social worker, a member of an elder-law firm, a staff member from the Gainesville Public Library, a representative from the NGHS Advanced Directives community education program, a faith community nurse, and a Life Engagement director from a local CCRC. Two members of the coalition presented to the Hall County Chamber of Commerce to discuss the goals and activities of the coalition and recruit additional community members to the coalition. Recruitment activities continue for a Gainesville City government representative, emergency services worker, and a member of the business community.

***Aim 1.3: In ten months, the Beyond the Dementia Coalition will meet to form an action team and plan for a community needs assessment to be completed in 2019-20.***

Students from the Brenau University occupational and physical therapy programs completed the initial steps for a community needs assessment during summer semester 2019. The coalition will continue to collaborate with the Brenau University College of Health Sciences programs toward completion of a community needs assessment.

**Goal 2:** Continue the past efforts of the Coalition partners by offering targeted educational events for sectors of the Gainesville community to promote dementia friendly practices.

**Objective 2.0:** Provide a dementia awareness training to members of the Gainesville community to provide education about dementia and dementia friendly practices.

***Aim 2.1: In four months, develop, deliver and evaluate dementia awareness training to 50 members of the broad faith community to include ministerial staff of all faiths and religious organizations from Gainesville in February 2019.***

In February 2019, the Beyond Dementia Coalition hosted a two hour seminar at Brenau University on how faith communities can support people with dementia and their families. The presentation was led by Laura Banner, FNP-C at Northeast Physicians Group Neurology and Jill Crunkleton, LMSW at Hospice of Northeast Georgia Medical Center. Learning objectives for participants were as follows:

1. Define dementia and learn to recognize common signs.
2. Understand the difference between disease and DIS-ease and the effects of loneliness on the body.
3. Learn strategies for creating dementia friendly faith communities.
4. Learn practical and spiritual skills for connecting with individuals living with dementia.
5. Know local resources helpful to families affected by dementia.

The presentation began with a brief introduction to the concept of dementia friendly communities as outlined in the video: “Dementia Friendly America Introduction” before moving into the aforementioned objectives. It concluded with a half hour discussion and talk-back at the individual tables in which participants were asked to reflect on what they had learned and either what they would like from their faith community (persons living with dementia or a care partner) or how they might begin to apply their learning in concrete ways in their own communities. Each participant also received a ten-page list of local, online, and print resources helpful to individual, families, care partners, and faith communities affected by dementia.

The event was attended by 126 people (including the presenters), 56 of whom identified as part of a faith community, 12 of whom identified as clergy. This exceeded our goal of reaching 50 members of faith communities; however actual number of faith community members may have been higher than reported. In an attempt to be more ecumenical, people were asked to identify what “organization” they were affiliated with rather than what “church” they were affiliated with. Many people who attended were also professional caregivers who may also be members of faith communities, but they tended to identify what agency they were with rather than their faith community or church.

Participants completed a final evaluation of the event. Results were overwhelmingly positive. Using a scale from 1 to 4, with 4 being most positive, 106 participants completed a satisfaction survey at the end of the event. Of those, mean scoring is below:

- The education given was useful: 3.6
- I was satisfied with the overall program: 3.6

- I would recommend this program to a friend: 3.6

Of these 106 participants, 9% were clergy members, 28% were laypersons, 13% were caregivers, 44% were professionals, 3% were students, and 3% identified as other. Suggestions for future events included wanting more information, more detailed information, longer presentation, and more time for discussion. Seventy-six participants completed a survey on attitudes and knowledge regarding dementia. Of those:

- 28 of those indicated they would like to “meet with other members of faith communities to brainstorm and discuss how to get dementia friendly programs or ministries started within our own congregations”.
- 21 indicated that they would like to host future education events either for their own faith community, the wider community, or both.
- 14 indicated they would be willing to serve on an Action team.

Several attendees of the faith community event requested and hosted additional education sessions. A 4-part education series was conducted at Nacoochee Presbyterian Church in White Co. Georgia on Wednesday nights during Lent 2019 (March 13, 20, 27, and April 3). Attendance ranged from 32-49 people per session. Each 45 minute session focused on one of four objectives:

1. Define dementia and learn to recognize common signs.
2. Understand the difference between disease and DIS-ease and the effects of loneliness on the body.
3. Learn strategies for creating dementia friendly faith communities.
4. Learn practical and spiritual skills for connecting with individuals living with dementia.

Three separate education sessions were conducted for residents of Lanier Village Estates (a CCRC in Gainesville, GA) in April, August, and September 2019 that focused on the effects of social isolation on people with dementia as well as identifying and successfully communicating with people living with dementia in their community. A total of 117 people attended at least one session.

### **Future Activities**

- In October 2019, coalition partner organizations (Hospice of Northeast Georgia Medical Center, Lanier Village Estates and Gainesville First United Methodist Church) will be hosting a free community screening of the documentary “Love Is Listening: Dementia Without Loneliness” followed by a presentation by producer and founder of Memory Bridge, Michael Verde.
- In October 2019, coalition partner organizations (Hospice of Northeast Georgia Medical Center, Lanier Village Estates) are sponsoring a workshop for community members and professional caregivers on ways to reduce the emotional isolation of people living with dementia led by Michael Verde.
- A seminar for Episcopal clergy in Northeast Georgia was planned for August 2019; however this had to be rescheduled for November 2019.

- Five members of the Coalition have been trained as Dementia Friends Champions. Three Dementia Friends Information Sessions targeting local high school students interested in health-related careers are scheduled to take place in November 2019, and January and February 2020.

***Aim 2.2: In six months, provide a Virtual Dementia Tour® experience for 20 targeted members of the Gainesville community. This experience will be offered through a partnership with the staff from Gardens of Gainesville and the Brenau University Ivester College of Health Sciences faculty and students.***

The Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT) is a simulation that allows participants to experience what it is like to have dementia and other comorbidities the geriatric population may experience. It creates a sense of empathy towards our community's family members and/or friends with dementia. After each tour there is a one-on-one debriefing session that provides feedback. Participants are impacted emotionally and physically, thus creating overall better interactions and future handling of dementia and elder-care. The VDT also creates a sense of urgency to improve care for people living with dementia.

- Thirty-six community members participated in the Virtual Dementia Tour on February 27th, 28<sup>th</sup>, and March 1st.
- Fifty-two staff members of Hospice of Northeast Georgia Medical Center participated in VDT on August 23, 2019.

Coalition members are scheduled to contact individuals from the area Red Cross, and emergency department about the interest in attending a future Virtual Dementia Tour.

***Aim 2.3: In twelve months, develop a training program for members of the Gainesville business community to promote dementia friendly practices to be completed in 2019-2020. This activity will be led by faculty and students from the Brenau University Applied Gerontology and Occupational Therapy Programs.***

Students from the Brenau University occupational and physical therapy programs developed educational sessions on dementia friendly business practices utilizing resources from the Dementia Friendly America toolkit and provided sessions to 20 businesses in the greater Gainesville area during summer semester 2019. Sixty-one students participated and were supervised by faculty from their respective programs. Though there were some initial setbacks in finding businesses willing to participate, (i.e. large national chains needed permission from their corporate offices to participate or already had their own training) students reported that they received very favorable feedback from the businesses that participated and that there was a great deal of community interest in the topic both on a professional and personal level.

Graduate students in the Clinical Counseling Psychology program at Brenau University are currently conducting research on the efficacy of educating staff at a local restaurant about those with dementia. Staff will initially be given a pretest to determine their knowledge about dementia. Students will then conduct a modified Virtual Dementia Tour and teach Validation techniques to restaurant staff. Once training has taken place, caregivers and their loved one with

dementia will visit the restaurant on three separate occasions. Staff as well as caregivers will then be interviewed about their experience. This will serve to not only make the staff aware of how to communicate and interact with others with dementia, they will also be known as a dementia friendly establishment. It is anticipated this will be a pilot program that can then be implemented at other restaurants and businesses in the area.

## **Summary**

The Beyond Dementia Coalition has a solid foundation for continued progress toward the original goals of the proposal. Over the course of the last year, the Coalition has nearly doubled in size and is now comprised of participants from a wide cross-section of the community who have committed to fostering dementia friendly communities throughout northeast Georgia by reducing stigma and inspiring people, through awareness and education, to recognize, engage, assist, and ultimately embrace people living with dementia as valuable and beloved members of our community. It benefits from growing support from the greater Gainesville community and strong partnerships with community organizations.

## **VI. Northwest Georgia Regional Commission**

The work that has been completed towards becoming a more dementia friendly community has been an overall success. Throughout this process we have had a great amount of support from many different sector leaders and caregivers in the community.

The Dementia Friendly Communities Toolkit was used to help guide us through this process. We completed all four phases of the Toolkit. During the first phase - Convene - we met with various community sector leaders, as well as those who are currently caregiving for a loved one with dementia or have been a caregiver in the past. From this group of community sector leaders and caregivers we formed an Action Team. All of the meetings were held at the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission at no cost for the meeting room.

During the second phase - Engage - numerous community sectors were asked to complete the questionnaires from the Toolkit, so we could assess our strengths and gaps in the community. Over 100 participants completed the surveys, some of which included law enforcement (county and city officers and the Sheriff's Department), the Alzheimer's Association, caregivers, home delivered meals provider, senior center, in-home care providers, hospice providers, adult day health provider, financial institution, assisted living care facility, and faith based community members.

Once the questionnaires were turned in we completed phase three - Analyze - of the Toolkit. The questionnaire results exhibited both the strengths and gaps in the community. The results indicated that the strengths in the community are caregiver support groups, the home delivered meals program, adult day health program, personal care/assisted living facilities, and the Alzheimer's Association. The gaps indicated were a lack of awareness of the resources that are available to those with dementia and their caregivers and training/education.

Between the third and fourth phases we held a community kickoff event in May 2019 at the local senior center, where we shared the dementia friendly initiative with the community and asked

those who would like to take a part in the initiative to join us. This event was advertised in the local newspaper, on Facebook, and the local radio station. There were many different community sector leaders and caregivers in attendance. The local newspaper was also in attendance and featured a story on the dementia friendly initiative. We offered a dementia virtual tour at the kickoff and also served lunch. Sergeant Chris Fincher with the Floyd County Police Department spoke about “Project Lifesaver,” in which our organization is a partner to help launch the program.

The fourth and final step of the Toolkit - Action - was then completed. Once the results were analyzed from the questionnaires, we met with the Action Team to generate an action plan. The action plan that was created included making a dementia friendly resource guide for the community members who have dementia as well as their caregivers, give business cards to local law enforcement that displays the contact information for the Northwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging and the Alzheimer’s Association to give to community members who do not know who or where to turn to for help, and to have the Alzheimer’s Association offer several trainings to all community sectors and members of the community. Our Action Team convened once more after the Action Plan was created to finalize everything.

The resource guides have been given to the Action Team to distribute as needed and housed in their place of business. The business cards have been given to law enforcement to hand out to community members who need them. We are also partnering with the Alzheimer’s Association who will be hosting six trainings on Effective Communication with those who have a diagnosis of dementia. The invitations to the trainings will include caregivers, law enforcement, first responders, commissioners, the veteran’s office, home health agencies, hospice agencies, pharmacies, in-home care providers, local hospitals, private physician’s offices, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult protective services, ombudsman, DFCS, social security administration, grocery stores, financial institutions, businesses, churches, colleges, senior center, and the general public in Rome, Georgia.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The Georgia Gerontology Society is proud to have been able to award funds to advance dementia friendly initiatives in five communities. Working towards becoming dementia friendly varies from community to community. Amongst our grantees, there was diversity in the way each community tackled this challenge with some having more success in completing phases of the toolkit than others. The ability to gather community support and include the perspectives of people living with dementia should continue to be a priority for any community hoping to become more dementia friendly. GGS suggests not rushing towards activities without first gaining a good sense of what is needed through assessing community needs. GGS is excited that all communities have plans to continue activities beyond the grant cycle. GGS would like to thank the GA Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services for making these grants possible and allowing GGS to be a catalyst for making Georgia more dementia friendly one community at a time.