



COMMUNITY NEWS, FIRE, LIBRARY, LOCAL NEWS, POLICE

Dementia-friendly training improves customer service

by [jgoralski](#) • September 26, 2019 • [0 Comments](#)



How can you spot a business that's dementia-friendly? Look for the sign at the door. Above, officials hang the first sign at Southington Public Library. From left, LiveWell director of community development Katy O'Leary, library director Kristi Sadowski, and Southington Town Manager Mark Sciota. (Photo by John Goralski)

By TAYLOR MURCHISON-GALLAGHER

STAFF WRITER

Members of Dementia Friendly Southington and town staff visited the public library on Thursday, Sept. 19, to celebrate the library's new designation—being the first organization in town that has undergone Dementia Friendly training.

“We all decided that we wanted to make sure that all of our employees—especially our first hand employees that handle customer service—are trained in Dementia Friendly, which in essence means we know how to service people who have dementia, which is very important,” said Mark Sciota, town manager. “There’s probably not a family in Southington that hasn’t been affected by dementia, mine included.”

Katy O’Leary, director of community development at LiveWell, 1261 S Main St., Plantsville, explained that Dementia Friendly Southington is an initiative designed to bring the community together, to aid residents in being “aware, inclusive, supportive of people affected by dementia.”

Part of this process includes training—not certifications, but rather designations—that gives an individual the knowledge to recognize signs of cognitive change, and the proper tools to aid and support their fellow Southington residents.

“We’ve been working for a year and a half to get where we have,” said O’Leary. “[We’ve] raised lots of awareness, and now what we’re doing is we’re taking a deeper dive. We’re doing actual training.”



A number of groups came together to launch the new Dementia Friendly Southington training at the Southington library. From left, Liz Chubet and Kristi Sadowski from the Southington Public Library, Kate Kerchaert from the Main Street Community Foundation, Katy O’Leary from LiveWell, and Southington Town Manager Mark Sciota.

(Photo by John Goralski)

A member of Dementia Friendly Southington, Liz Chubet, serves as the adult program coordinator at the library. Library executive director, Kristi Sadowski, explained that Chubet was the first to bring the initiative into the library’s sights. This kind of training, in Sadowski’s opinion, is very important to the library as a means of inclusion to all patrons.

“Everyone is welcome here, and we need to make sure that every member of the community has that acceptance,” said Sadowski, “and that our staff is prepared and comfortable, of course, to work with everyone the best they can and no hesitations.”

On her part, Chubet has used the training to introduce several programs to the library community.

Beginning with a poetry reading group, the library has expanded their Dementia Friendly offerings to include Take Me Back Totes, tote bags which contain different items pertaining to a specific topic, such as cooking and baking, or bags designed to reflect a specific time period, such as the 1950s or the 1960s. They have also introduced Dementia Friendly designations on library cards, in order to extend loan periods on certain materials, to ensure that people don't feel rushed.

The Southington Public Library is also paving a new way of inclusion, by being the first library in the state of Connecticut to house a memory café.

“It's a place for people with cognitive change and their loved one to kind of leave dementia at the door, and come in as partners and just enjoy an activity, some light refreshments, just chat,” said Chubet. “The group is very cohesive because they're all in the same boat. They just enjoy each other's company. We do ice breaker questions that are fun and very lighthearted.”

The Dementia Friendly Southington initiative was made possible by the Bradley Henry Barnes and Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust, housed at the Main Street Community Foundation.

“The Barnes Memorial Trust was created to support the health and wellbeing of the residents of Southington. One of the four areas of concentration that we identified when we did a community needs study several years ago was programs that would help support an aging population in Southington,” said Kate Kerchaert, director of grants and programs at the Main Street Community Foundation. “We're actually quite proud to be associated with this initiative.”

While the library may have been the first to schedule their training session, there are several organizations who have already made the commitment to be Dementia Friendly, including Chip's Family Restaurant, Bread for Life, and the town's police and fire departments.

Area businesses and organizations that are interested in scheduling a training should contact O'Leary at (860) 628-3062.

To comment on this story or to contact staff writer Taylor Murchison-Gallagher, email her at TMurchison@PlainvilleObserver.com.

Related

[Alzheimer's patients lead informational campaign](#)

May 18, 2017

In "Local News"

[Library officials talk about expansion](#)

May 6, 2019

In "Library"

[2018: Southington's year in review](#)

December 31, 2018

In "Local News"

Tags: [Bradley Henry Barnes and Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust](#) [Bread for Life](#) [Chip's Family Restaurant](#)
[Dementia Friendly Southington](#) [Kate Kerchaert](#) [Katy O'Leary](#) [Kristi Sadowski](#) [LiveWell](#) [Liz Chubet](#)
[Main Street Community Foundation](#) [Mark Sciota](#) [Southington](#) [Southington Fire Department](#)
[Southington Police Department](#) [Southington Public Library](#)

[← It's time to turn our focus to apples...](#)

[Obituary: Nicholas Paul Lanteri, 100 →](#)

Leave a Reply

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.

RECENT POSTS

- [Obituary: Phyllis Jean \(Morway\) Tettelbach, 90](#)
- [Apple Harvest Festival parking restrictions](#)
- [Sponsorships help fund festival festivities](#)
- [Football rebounds with lopsided victory](#)
- [Girls Soccer: Lady Knights survive first test](#)