MAREP will continue to enhance dementia care at the RIA

Written by Kristian Partington

The Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program (MAREP) was created out of the love Kenneth Murray had for his late wife, Helen. She lived with Alzheimer’s disease and as her primary care partner, Ken understood the need for greater support and resources for individuals with dementia and their families.

Since 1993, MAREP has been a global leader in transforming leading-edge research into practical tools. When the Research Institute for Aging (RIA) was founded 12 years later with a mandate to enhance the lives of older adults through research and innovation, collaboration between the two partners made perfect sense.

That collaboration is growing ever deeper with the announcement that MAREP is moving its home base from the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo to the RIA this fall. The combination of expertise and growing research in dementia at the RIA and MAREP’s experience creating practical tools will ensure that those living with dementia, their loved ones and care partners will be better able to manage the transitions and challenges that living with dementia often presents.

“RIA is ideally suited to propel MAREP forward,” Mr. Murray said following the announcement. “To be able to integrate the work of MAREP with other research and educational initiatives at the RIA will have such a positive impact on people’s lives.”

The strong partnership both organizations have developed over the years is exemplified in the award-winning LIVING the Dementia Journey (LDJ) education program, created in collaboration with the RIA, MAREP and Schlegel Villages. Recognized in 2017 by the Ontario Long-Term Care Association as the Best New Long-Term Care Product or Service of the Year, LDJ is an example of how partnerships can be leveraged to transform lives, and the integration of MAREP into the RIA will only enhance future possibilities.

“The success that MAREP has had in our community and beyond – it’s really special,” says Emily Lambe, who supported MAREP as a co-op student before taking on a role with the RIA. “I’m excited that the RIA will be supporting MAREP’s programs and continuing to build the momentum. Plus, with the addition of two new RIA research chairs focusing on dementia, it just feels like a great fit.”

The whole RIA team shares Emily’s excitement about the prospect of deepening the partnership and continuing the impact borne out of Mr. Murray’s vision.

“We’re excited to add MAREP to the RIA’s core programs,” says Josie d’Avernas, executive director of the RIA. “Both MAREP and the RIA integrate research and education to improve dementia care practices and quality of life for older adults, and this consolidation of strengths will accelerate the impact we can have.”

A cornerstone philosophy of both organizations is a recognition that people living with dementia and their loved ones must be authentic partners in both research and the development of practical educational materials. Emily sees this as one of the great strengths of the relationship between MAREP and the RIA.

“There is opportunity in this collaboration for people living with dementia and their families to not only benefit from MAREP’s tools and resources,” she says, “but also get involved as key stakeholders and contribute to new research that will improve dementia care.”

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