

Media Release

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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‘Talking history’ at History Festival

People living with dementia or memory loss and their families or carers will be encouraged to ‘talk history’ as part of South Australia’s History Festival this month.

History Trust of South Australia Community History Officer Pauline Cockrill will join ACH Group dementia expert Teresa Moran to host a discussion and workshop.

As part of the workshop, people will learn how to create a ‘memory box’ – a collection of items such as dolls, comics, cooking utensils, games and tools - that can help spark conversation.

Young and old will be welcome to practice conversational skills and learn techniques for sharing and creating memories together using ‘reminiscence’.

“Reminiscence is an important tool that can help people living with memory loss and dementia to communicate,” Ms Moran said. “When dementia progresses it can be challenging for family and friends because it can be difficult to know what to talk about, because they may not be able to engage in conversation about the present due to short term memory loss. By using family heirlooms, such as photos or historical items, a person with dementia can tap into long term memories that often remain intact until the later stages of dementia. This makes it easier for them to initiate and engage in conversation.”

Ms Moran said while short term memory loss was often an early symptom of dementia, long term memory could remain intact until quite late in the disease.

“Recalling these long term memories is using the strength of a person with dementia,” she said. “The person feels valued, finds a sense of themselves and their life accomplishments, which increases their quality of life.”

Ms Moran said it was important not to ask the person with dementia to recall specific events or memories as this could cause stress.

“It’s best to use objects to reminisce together, which in turn can prompt memories and organic conversation.”

Ms Cockrill said many of the world’s museums are now taking historic objects out into communities to enable people to use them as conversation starters.

“Research on these techniques affirms the positive effects it has on wellbeing for people of all ages,” she said.

The History Trust of SA puts together memory boxes with themed historical objects which it loans on request.

Last year a similar workshop held as part of the Flourishing in the Fleurieu Festival was welcomed by many in the community.

John Amos, of Normanville, came along to the talk with his wife Valerie, who is living with dementia and Parkinson’s and is a resident of ACH Group’s Yankalilla Centre.

“I thoroughly enjoyed it – it was interesting to find out more about how people with dementia can still recall things from the past,” he said. “I would like to see more events like this, because we all need to know more about dementia.”

End Media Release

About ACH Group

ACH Group is a not-for-profit aged care organisation that has been offering services to support good lives for older people in South Australia since 1952.

As well as accommodation options across Adelaide, the Fleurieu Peninsula and East Melbourne, the group offers a range of health, wellbeing, respite and support services, help at home and social activities.

Our 1700 specialist staff and hundreds of volunteers share the belief that older people should be valued and respected, connected to their communities and in control of their lives.

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