2026

SPARK! Creative Engagement Conference

Hosted by

ARTS for ALL WISCONSIN

Presented by

SPARK!

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS *for* PEOPLE WITH MEMORY LOSS *and* THEIR CARE PARTNERS

Welcome

The arts change lives. Perhaps you have witnessed this firsthand, whether through your own personal experience or though engaging others in artistic expression. Creativity knows no bounds and transcends limitations.

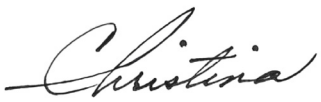
Over the next two days, you will have the opportunity to experience how SPARK! provides people with memory loss and their care partners opportunities to experience connection, escape, and discovery through facilitated arts and culture experiences. You will see how SPARK! also provides opportunities to create community, provide empathy and understanding.

Hosting the 2026 SPARK! Creative Engagement Conference is an honor and we're grateful you are here to share, learn, and laugh with us. Over the next two days, we will explore ideas while we strengthen connections within the arts and health care communities. We may even change a few lives together.

I would like to personally thank Tricia Blasko and our fellow SPARK! Alliance members for their guidance in the planning process and for their dedication to this important program throughout the nation. Thank you, also, to our sponsors and many volunteers on whose support we rely. To everyone who traveled from near and far, we are grateful you are here.

At a time when people with disabilities and the people who love them face increasing challenges, the need to come together, to share resources, and lift each other up is more important than ever.

Let's have a great conference!



Christina Martin-Wright
Executive Director of Arts for All Wisconsin

Arts for All Wisconsin is a proud SPARK! Alliance member. Thank you for your support of this program for people with memory loss and their care partners. Please consider donating today to ensure continued access to SPARK! and other programs for people of all ages with disabilities throughout Wisconsin. Your generosity helps us to achieve our mission of expanding the capabilities, confidence, and quality of life for children and adults with disabilities by providing programs in the arts.

Donate today at www.artsforallwi.org/donate.

Conference Schedule

Monday, November 9

1:00 pm **Welcome**, Starlight Theater

1:15 pm **An Introduction to SPARK!**, Starlight Theater

1:30 pm **The Importance of Building Community for Both the Caregiver and the Person Living with Dementia by Dr. Nathaniel Chin**, Starlight Theater

2:15 pm **Laughing Through the Hard Stuff: The Unexpected Power of Humor in Caregiving by Dani Klein Modisett**, Starlight Theater

3:00 pm **Break**, Fourth Floor Lobby

3:15 pm **Care for the Caregiver: Finding Joy, Strength, & Resilience by Dani Klein Modisett**, Studio 4D

4:15 pm **SPARK! Alliance Presentation**, Studio 4D

Tuesday, November 10

9:00 am **Sound Bath with Joan Herzing**, Starlight Theater

9:15 am **Chair Yoga with Sarah Jacobson and Janelle McGhee**, Starlight Theater

9:30 am **Welcome**, Starlight Theater

9:45 am **Presentation from Wisconsin Alzheimer's Association**, Starlight Theater

10:15 am **Break**, Fourth Floor Lobby

10:30 am **Break-Out Session** (choose one to attend)

- **Beyond the Stage: Theater Through Play**, Studio 4A
- **Access for All: Best Practices for Inclusive SPARK! Programming**, Studio 4B
- **Writing Poetry to Connect Family, Caregivers, and Community by Poet Fabu,** Studio 4C
- **Dementia and Grief**, Starlight Theater

11:30 am **Break**

11:45 am **Break-Out Session** (choose one to attend)

- **Objects Tell Stories: Finding SPARK! in History**, Studio 4A
- **Sensory Engagement: Let's Rock and Roll**, Studio 4B
- **Writing Poetry to Connect Family, Caregivers, and Community by Poet Fabu**, Studio 4C
- **Memory Issues & Brain Health**, Starlight Theater

12:45 pm **Lunch**

2:00 pm **Break-Out Session** (choose one to attend)

- **My Melody, Studio 4A**
- **The Sensory Landscape: Designing Nature**, Studio 4B
- **101 Ways to SPARK!**, Studio 4C
- **Beyond Looking: A Sensory Approach to the Gallery**, Starlight Theater

3:00 pm **Beni Daiko Performance**, Starlight Theater

3:30 pm **Closing Session**, Starlight Theater

Session Descriptions

Beyond the Stage: Theater Through Play

Explore how theater can invite people to see, hear, move, imagine, and connect in new ways with Amber Joswick from SPARK! On the Go. This interactive session offers sensory-based approaches using voice, music, movement, props, storytelling, and theatrical play to create meaningful SPARK! experiences.

Access for All: Best Practices for Inclusive SPARK! Programming

Learn from Dawn Koceja with the Milwaukee Public Museum, a leader in museum accessibility and inclusion. This session explores practical strategies for creating accessible and equitable experiences for all people. Participants will learn how to reduce barriers, adapt programs, and build meaningful opportunities for creativity and connection.

Writing Poetry to Connect Family, Caregivers and Community by Poet Fabu

Spend this breakout session writing poetry with poet Fabu Carter. She will focus on using poetry as a tool for healing. The focus of poetry is whatever you decide, whether it be for joy, laughter, or connection.

Dementia and Grief

Learn from Deanna Rymaszewski, Clinical Educator and Social Worker for Agrace Hospice Care, about how grief and dementia interact. Dive into grief support as a caregiver and SPARK! facilitator.

Sensory Engagement: Let's Rock and Roll

From pebbles to boulders, the sight, smell, sound, and sensation of stones all have a story to tell. Enjoy folklore, music, artmaking, and more with Claire Carlson from the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Memory issues & Brain Health

A presentation by Maria Mora Pinzon with Badger Talks about dementias, including Alzheimer's Disease, and the evidence on how to keep and maintain our brains healthy.

The Sensory Landscape: Designing Nature-Based SPARK! Experiences

This session explores intentional ways to incorporate the senses, movement, and imagination into nature-based experiences for people living with memory loss and their care partners. It is led by Emily Brown with Wehr Nature Center and Shelly Rollins with Schlitz Audubon Nature Center.

Beyond Looking: A Sensory Approach to the Gallery

Join Heather Casper with the Minnesota Marine Art Museum and Carrie Robinson-Cannon with the Rochester Art Center, as they use two artworks as starting points to demonstrate open-ended conversation, imagination, sensory experiences, personal connections, and shared activities like poetry and song.

101 Ways to SPARK!

Come ready to play, experiment, and collect ideas! This interactive session shares 101 simple ways to bring sensory engagement, creativity, movement, conversation, and imagination into SPARK! experiences.

Learn About Our Presenters



Dr. Nathaniel Chin serves as medical director and Clinical Core Co-Leader for the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC) as well as mPI and medical director for the Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention (WRAP). Dr. Chin is the host of the Wisconsin ADRC's podcast, Dementia Matters. In each bi-weekly episode, he interviews local and national Alzheimer's disease experts about research advances and caregiver strategies. His father's condition influenced the way he began to look at his own career, and Dr. Chin decided to pursue a career as a geriatrician and scientist focused on dementia, specifically Alzheimer's disease. While completing his internal medicine residency at the University of California, San Diego, his father was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's disease (AD).

In his keynote speech, **The Importance of Building Community For Both the Caregiver and the Person Living with Dementia**, Dr. Chin will discusses the impact that dementia has on everyone involved. His firsthand experiences and ongoing research provide unique insight on how community can provide essential support.



Dani Klein Modisett is the Founder/CEO of Laughter On Call. She is also a comedian/actor and author of the book, "Take My Spouse, Please." (Penguin Random House) a part-memoir, part how-to for creating shared laughter to keep your marriage happy and healthy. Dani taught Stand-Up at UCLA for 10 years and has coached keynote speakers, business leaders, and Congressional candidates to use more humor in their communication. In 2018 she launched Laughter On Call to help caregivers all those in need of connection to create shared laughter. She has been a speaker at CALA, ICAA, Stanford, MIT, Columbia, UCLA, Dartmouth, Fuqua and Harvard Business School.

Dani will present **Laughing Through the Hard Stuff: The Unexpected Power of Humor in Caregiving** in which she will inspire with her humor, heart, and honest stories—reminding all caregivers that laughter isn't just okay, it's essential. Additionally, she will provide a full program **Care for the Caregiver: Finding Joy, Strength, & Resilience**, a refreshing and uplifting interactive session grounded in Improv exercises, designed to help caregivers recharge, rediscover the power of self-care and of course, laugh together!



Fabu Phillis Carter is a poet, literary artist, culture consultant and columnist for Cap Times and Capital City Hues, and the Senior Program Manager for the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. The first African American Madison Poet Laureate (2008-2012), her poetry is in buildings and sidewalks throughout Madison.



Joan Herzing started her yogic journey over two decades ago. She holds a yoga school certification through 21st Century Yoga on the Mat with Alex Pfeiffer and an advanced training through the RajaHatha school of yoga. She is a Reiki Master Teacher, and has completed additional coursework in Sound Healing, Aromatherapy, Pranayama, Meditation, Yin Yoga and Yoga Nidra.



Heidi Neely has been shaped by the arts her whole life through playing instruments, creating murals, and designing spaces. Today she brings this creative energy to her role as Program Manager with the Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter. She leads community education on brain health, dementia and caregiving, and is a family caregiver herself.



Deanna Rymaszewski is the Clinical Educator – Social Worker for Agrace Hospice Care, a not-for-profit hospice based in Fitchburg, WI that serves South Central Wisconsin. She holds a doctorate in social work, is a licensed Advanced Practice Social Worker, and is certified in Advanced Palliative and Hospice Social Work, with additional certification in advanced dementia care.



Maria Mora Pinzon is assistant professor in the division of geriatrics and gerontology at the University of Wisconsin–Madison School of Medicine and Public Health. Her research program focuses on health services research in dementia care, barriers to access to medical care in diverse underrepresented communities, and health disparities in Latinx communities, with particular interest in improving access to care for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for Latinx individuals.

My Melody uses songwriting to bring the power of music and creative expression to individuals in the early stages of dementia, along with their care partners. Each participant is paired with a professional teaching artist. Together, they write an original song inspired by personal memories, stories and dreams.

Beni Daiko is Madison's premiere Japanese taiko drumming group. Founded in November 2012, the group now includes members from a variety of backgrounds. Their mission is to teach, preserve, and perform the ancient art of Taiko drumming, a form of traditional Japanese musical expression that combines mental discipline and physical demand.



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