

Ellen and Ann: Facing Memory Loss Together



Ellen (left) and Ann (right) smile as they spent some time together recently.

We chatted with Ellen Watters, who reached out to Lyngblomsten Community Services for resources and help in her role as a caregiver for her partner, Ann, who is living with memory loss. Here, Ellen reflects on their journey and the support she has received from Lyngblomsten.

Q. How did you get connected with Lyngblomsten Community Services? What services did you receive and how did they benefit/support you?

A. I read online about Lyngblomsten's caregiver support resources and contacted Lisa Brown (Caregiver Services Coordinator with Lyngblomsten Community Services). She and I had several sessions in person, which were enormously helpful. At one point I said it seemed as if Ann's dementia had nosedived in a couple of weeks. Lisa suggested that she be evaluated for a possible infection, which turned out to be true. I credit Lisa with giving me both support and valuable information!

Q. Please share your partner Ann's journey with dementia.

A. Ann was diagnosed in late 2021 with dementia. She managed fairly well and we had a very good quality of life with friends and activities. Last winter, however, she had a serious fall, and then several infections caused a fairly dramatic downturn in her cognitive functioning. Earlier this fall she had an infection that put her in the hospital and eventually in the Lyngblomsten Care Center's transitional care unit (TCU) in St. Paul.

Q. Your involvement with Lyngblomsten Community Services led to Ann participating in The Gathering several times. How did you feel about The Gathering, as both an enrichment program and a respite for caregivers?

A. I wish I had gotten Ann involved in The Gathering earlier in her disease progression. The rich array of activities and stimulation are terrific, but unfortunately Ann wasn't really able to take advantage of it—other than visiting with a staff member's dog, Ole, which was the highlight of every visit!

Q. Ann is now living in the Stanford Neighborhood of the Lyngblomsten Care Center. How did you choose the Care Center for Ann's new home (as opposed to other options for those living with memory loss)? How are you each adjusting, and what has your experience been like so far?

A. Once Ann was in the TCU at Lyngblomsten, it was an easy decision to move to Stanford. I did talk with some other providers of memory care, but it just seemed that Lyngblomsten was right. I visited the neighborhood and talked with Jackie, an RN who said she has been at Lyngblomsten nearly 30 years. Other staff have also been there a long time, which says a lot about the organization. Staff is the most important consideration and they are amazing!

Q. What advice or encouragement would you give to others who are in the position of caring for a loved one living with dementia? What has been most helpful for you in your journey?

A. What I have learned the past months is to seek out support and help. That can be hard but there are people who care and who have walked this path before who can help.