

A Special Dementia  
Feature From:  
**Alzheimer Society**  
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# Providing extraordinary *virtual care*

By Monica Fleck, McCormick Care Group

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact everyone and particularly those who are caring for someone with dementia at home. When the outbreak began, the community programs that provided support, education and a much-needed break, such as adult day programs and overnight respite options, were either cancelled or reduced considerably. Many caregivers suddenly found themselves facing ongoing challenges helping their loved ones with meals, bathing, providing personal care, and seeking outlets for entertainment and meaningful engagement -- all while keeping them safe.

"Help to support caregivers manage their important roles at home became urgently needed," says Karen Johnson, Director of McCormick Dementia Services.

"Once the pandemic started, we were forced to re-think how we offer our caregiver education and support services, and how to deliver meaningful recreation programming beyond the in-person model," says Johnson. "In many ways, this pandemic has offered us the opportunity to be creative and provide our services in new and unique ways."

In response, McCormick Dementia Services quickly developed several virtual resources to help caregivers and teach them the skills they need. A key project was the development of the Caregiver's Corner website, which contains an ever-increasing variety of presentations and videos delivered by nursing and recreation staff members that educate caregivers about personal care, recreation activities, and strategies for managing day-to-day tasks.

"The site marks a significant step toward empowering caregivers with the knowledge of what to do and how to do it," says Johnson.

"There is a lot on the site; it is very well organized," says Irene\*, a caregiver whose mother regularly attended the McCormick Day Program until the pandemic began. "We haven't explored even half of it yet, but we will!"

Technology has also enabled McCormick Dementia Services to offer connectedness through support groups, exercise classes and social time delivered via Zoom videoconferencing.

"Often, the best assistance we can provide is to connect caregivers with each other to remind them that they are not alone in this journey," says Johnson.

"One of our caregivers called to tell us how he has been watching our videos," she adds. "He said that the one on tips and tricks to provide personal care was very helpful when assisting his mom. He was very thankful."

"I want to thank the staff for all the hard work that went into this outreach," says Irene. "It is truly a wonderful resource!"

*\*Please note that names have been changed for privacy reasons. Visit the Caregiver's Corner website at [mccormickdementiaservices.ca](http://mccormickdementiaservices.ca).*



Staff at McCormick Dementia Services have been finding new and creative ways to reach out to people living with dementia and their caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic.