



Dementia Friendly Services

Saline, Michigan

www.dfsaline.org



Dementia Friendly Movie Program Toolkit

Part Two:

Planning Your Event

Ideas for a fun and successful movie day!



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**MICHIGAN HEALTH
ENDOWMENT FUND**

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

1. Create a fun experience in a safe, welcoming environment for persons living with dementia and care partners, family, and friends.

- Choose classic movies or familiar favorites. Musicals are great to encourage engagement, as are comedies. Welcome audience participation such as singing, clapping and dancing.
- Develop a streamlined welcoming/ticketing process that allows your guests to skip the theater lines, if possible. Assemble a volunteer staff to guide and assist guests through the process.
- Provide basic dementia education to all volunteers and theater staff, so everyone involved with the event can understand and properly support guests.
- Ask the theater to lower the movie's volume and keep some lights turned on during the show.
- Consider requesting RSVP's but not requiring prepayment, so as to acknowledge the unpredictable nature of the dementia journey.

2. Connect those affected by dementia with others on the same journey.

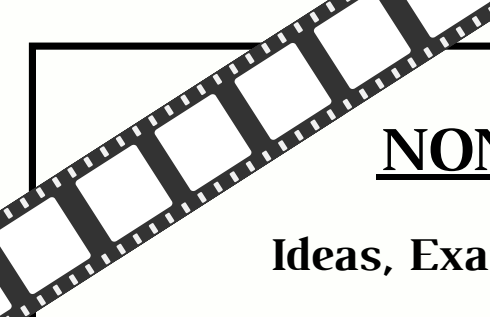
- Develop at least one element of the event that promotes social engagement. (e.g. pre-show buffet, pre-show Q&A, etc.)
- Encourage volunteers to help make connections between guests.
- Advertise other events that have the same goal. (e.g. Memory Cafes)
- Promote a party-like atmosphere, as opposed to the traditional quiet movie-going experience.

3. Provide useful and reliable information about dementia and caregiving, and highlight available resources within the community.

- Dedicate a space to reliable, evidence-based literature (brochures, pamphlets, etc.) Provide informational material regarding dementia and aging, and brochures and business cards from local resources and businesses.
- Many of our volunteers are professionals in the senior and/or dementia field in our community and, as such, are wonderful resources for our guests.

4. Use this event to raise the community's awareness of dementia. Affirm to attendees and the general public that persons dealing with dementia *belong*; they are a part of the community, not apart from it.

- Use signage (on the theater door, at the welcome and literature tables) to proclaim the welcome presence of persons dealing with dementia.
- Provide event flyers for anyone who is interested about the nature of the event.
- Most importantly, invite EVERYONE to attend this event, not just those living with dementia. **All** people should be welcome in **all** spaces; that is the world we are working toward.



NON-ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Ideas, Examples, and Tips From the Flagship Movie

Not every element in this section is required for a successful program. This guide simply reflects how *Dementia Friendly Services* organizes its events, outlining the structure and elements we employ. All details can be adapted, altered, or changed to fit the needs of your venue, team, and community. We encourage you to have fun and make the event your own!

Schedule of Events

We currently offer our showing on the second Wednesday of every month at 2:00 p.m. The predictable day has been very helpful for our guests, as they can easily plan ahead. This time was chosen because it is typically slower for the theater, resulting in less traffic and a calmer environment for our guests. The timing also works well with the schedule of residential facilities (which often attend in large groups) because it doesn't conflict with their lunch or dinner times.

- 12:30 p.m. – Team arrives with supplies and begins setup
- 1:00 p.m. – Volunteer meeting to assign roles and answer questions
- 1:15 p.m. – Guest arrival and social time begins in the theater
- 1:45 p.m. – Emcee invites guests to take seats, makes announcements, and shares trivia
- 2:00 p.m. – Movie begins (start time flexible for seating needs)
- After movie (about 4:00 p.m.) – Prize drawings, food distribution, and assisted dismissal by row/section

EVENT SET-UP

Curbside

"Dementia Friendly Movie" signage is displayed to guide guests. Volunteers are stationed at the curb to greet arrivals and can wait with guests while caregivers park the car. Chairs are available for those who need to sit while waiting.

Welcome Station

Located near the lobby entrance, the Welcome Station consists of approximately three 8-foot tables with clear, visible signage. It includes the following areas:

- Ticket Pick-Up – Staffed by a volunteer
- Payment Station – Equipped with a cash box and Square reader, staffed by 1–2 volunteers
- Name Tag Station – Staffed by 1–2 volunteers
- Programs – Available for guests to take
- Goody Bags or giveaways – Distributed at the station
- Literature Table – Featuring informational materials



Quiet Space

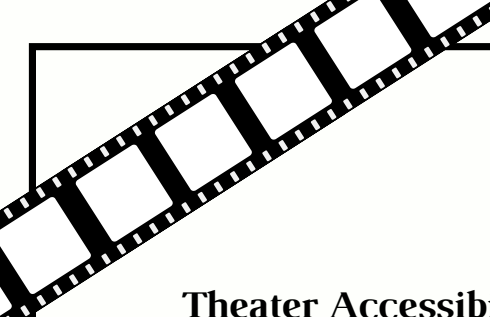
Clearly marked with signage both leading to and within the room, the Quiet Space offers a calm environment for guests who need a break. Comfortable seating and water are provided.

Ticket Taker Stand

This is obviously only applicable if your guests are provided paper tickets, something we do to make the experience feel more like the 'old days.' **We may be able to provide you with some customized tickets to get you started!** Small table and basket for ticket stubs outside theater entrance. Purple feet stickers on the floor lead guests from the welcome table to the ticket taker.

Buffet

Two to three 8-foot tables are set up at the front of the theater, beneath the screen. Food and drinks are neatly arranged alongside plates, napkins, utensils, cups, and serving tools. Trays are available for delivering food to guests who require assistance



EVENT SET-UP

Theater Accessibility & Setup Considerations

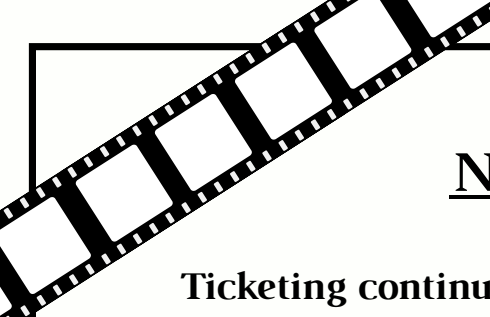
- Post clear signage to reserve no- and low-barrier seating rows for guests using wheelchairs, walkers, or those with other mobility challenges.
- Designate an out-of-the-way area for walkers and wheelchairs—such as under the screen, if space allows. Use stickers and markers to label each item with the owner's name and seat location for easy retrieval.
- Ensure a microphone and any other necessary equipment are set up in advance. (In our case, this is handled by the theater staff.)

NOTABLE ELEMENTS

Ticketing

There are several effective ways to manage the reservation and ticketing process. The best approach depends on a variety of factors, including your group's agreement/financial arrangement with the theater, the venue's seating capacity, the availability of staff or volunteers, and access to online reservation systems or other technologies. **Dementia Friendly Services can work with you to develop a ticketing process tailored to your specific needs and circumstances.**

- We kindly ask guests to RSVP if they plan to attend the show, either by phone or email. This helps us estimate attendance, particularly for planning food and refreshments (see details below). We do not require prepayment, as we want to avoid deterring anyone due to potential scheduling conflicts.
- Reservations for large groups (e.g. residential facilities that bring groups by bus) are particularly helpful, so that arrangements can be made to keep the group seated together.
- Our theater has a seating capacity of 130. Unless RSVPs reach or approach that limit, we are glad to welcome walk-in guests. At this time, we prefer not to turn away anyone who hasn't RSVP'd in advance.



NOTABLE ELEMENTS

Ticketing continued

- In Saline, our ticket cost, set by the theater, is \$5. We collect payment (cash, check or credit card) directly from the guests, and then pay the theater in one lump sum.
- Guests purchase their tickets at our dedicated welcome table, located at the front of the lobby. This setup ensures all interactions are with our dementia-trained team and helps avoid placing extra demands on theater staff. At the welcome table, guests can pick up their tickets and pay by cash, check, or credit card. We also offer a "pay later" option through our website. While we strive to ensure that cost or the payment process is never a barrier to attendance, we've found that most guests are comfortable with paying. We recommend that groups charge admission to help offset event expenses.
- We purchase custom paper tickets, with a perforated stub, in bulk from UPrinting, mostly to provide a fun and familiar movie experience. **Sample file provided.**
- Guests are greeted by a ticket-taker volunteer at the theater entrance, who tears the ticket and returns the stub for entry into the post-movie drawing. While the physical ticket adds to the experience and is used for the drawing, it is not required for entry; sometimes tickets get misplaced, so guests are welcome to enter the theater with or without it.

Program Booklet

We provide a free program booklet at each movie, the goals of which are to:

- Provide information about that day's movie, as well as future movies and other details about the dementia friendly movie program.
- Provide multiple resources and tidbits of information into one document that people can take home.
- Promote other, similar events and organizations in our community.
- Promote the sponsors of our event, and to allow local businesses to advertise.

We reuse the same template each month, making changes as needed.

Not every guest will take a program; to limit waste, we print enough for about 70% of guests to take one. **Sample program provided.**



NOTABLE ELEMENTS

Giveaways

- At the welcome table, we provide free goody bags filled with donated items from local businesses.
- After the show, we hold a prize giveaway featuring items such as gift baskets donated by local businesses and movie-related memorabilia like T-shirts or posters. Winners are selected through a random drawing using the ticket stubs collected at the door. Additional prizes may be awarded for enthusiastic participation, best movie-themed costume, or traveling the farthest to attend.

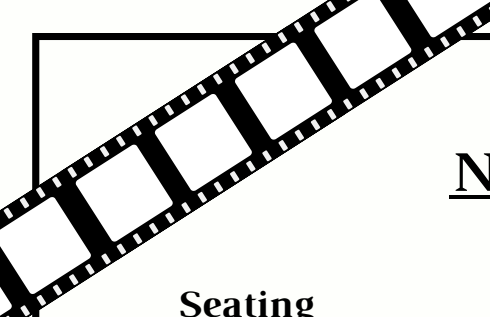
Complimentary Buffet

We offer free food to our guests primarily to foster social interaction around the buffet, as building connections is a central goal of the event. Additionally, providing food helps keep the movie-going experience affordable and offers a convenient alternative to waiting in the theater's concession line.

- Our typical offerings include crackers or chips, fresh fruit and veggie trays, small sandwiches or roll-ups, cookies, and a selection of water and juice. We base the quantity of food on the number of RSVPs received. We also welcome sponsorship from local businesses to help provide all or part of the refreshments.
- Our buffet is stationed in the front of the theater, under the movie screen. We have volunteers stationed around the buffet to encourage guest interaction, and to provide assistance as needed.

Name tags

- The use of name tags or badges is incredibly helpful to all involved when working with people living with dementia. The ability to address someone by name provides an immediate familiarity and personalization, and can be very reassuring. Additionally, while we do not differentiate people living with dementia from other guests, it can be useful to know who in the building is attending your program, especially if you see someone looking lost or in the wrong place.



NOTABLE ELEMENTS

Seating

- At the end of the Welcome area, volunteers and two professional caregivers - hired through a non-medical home care agency (see more below) - are available to escort guests into the theater and assist with seating. The theater we use has steps leading to all but one row, and many guests require help navigating them safely. To improve accessibility, Dementia Friendly Services has invested in temporary ramps that fit over one set of stairs, allowing more guests to access additional seating. (See more below)
- Seating is generally first come, first serve, with two exceptions:
 - The barrier-free row is reserved for guests in wheelchairs or those unable to navigate steps. Additionally, the row directly behind, which requires only one step, is reserved for guests with limited mobility.
 - For large groups, often from local senior living facilities, we use signs to reserve blocks of seats to ensure the group can stay together.
- To keep aisles clear, volunteers collect and store walkers and wheelchairs in a designated area. Each item is labeled with a sticker with the owner's seat row and number to ensure easy return at the end of the movie.

A word about hiring caregivers from an agency:

We have found that bringing in professional caregivers who are trained to provide proper standby assistance, are incredibly helpful, especially for guests who have mobility challenges. Unless you find a theater that has no steps, you will probably have some guests who struggle to navigate to their seats safely. Professional caregivers can take the burden off of volunteers, who may not be prepared to provide proper assistance. Additionally, reputable caregiving agencies should be bonded and insured, which provides a layer of protection for everyone involved. Although this is an expensive addition (ranging from \$20-\$40 per hour per caregiver), we find it worthwhile. Our local agency offers us a reduced cost, and we acknowledge them as a sponsor of the event. **Dementia Friendly Services may be able to help you cover the cost of hiring a caregiver for your initial event.**

NOTABLE ELEMENTS

Seating continued

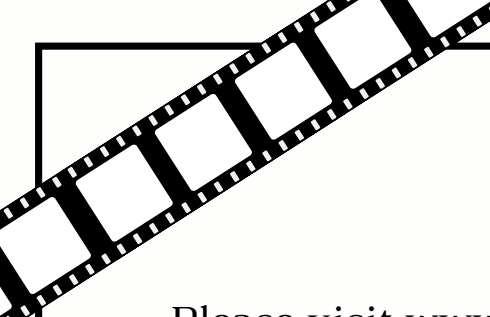
A word about purchasing portable wheelchair ramps:

After a few months of our movie program, we were getting close to not having enough barrier-free seating, and we did not want to turn anyone away due to an inaccessibility issue. We found foldable wheelchair ramps on Amazon that fit over the theater stairs. These ramps are not perfect and must be navigated carefully. We make everyone is assisted by a caregiver or volunteer. They do, however, open up a lot of seating options to people who wouldn't otherwise be able to use the stairs. Our theater kindly stores the ramps for us, but they are light enough (and have handles!) that we could transport them back and forth. Overall, they have been a valuable addition to our program. For communities that are dedicated and provide a long-term plan for their program, Dementia Friendly Services may be able to help purchase ramps.



Pre-Movie Slideshow

Our theater allows us to create a slideshow that plays on the screen before the movie starts. It runs in place of the usual commercials and is on while guests are getting seated and settled. We use the slideshow to promote the next movie and other upcoming events, to recognize our sponsors, to thank volunteers, and to display fun facts. While certainly not necessary, you might want to consider asking your theater if this is possible - we've found it to be a useful tool for communicating with our audience. **Sample slideshow and template available.**



IN CLOSING

Please visit www.dfsaline.org/starting-a-movie-program to see all supporting documents listed in the Toolkit, as well as our photo library.

We hope this list of examples and ideas has been helpful to you, but if you're located in Michigan, the help doesn't stop there! Our movie expansion coordinator, Ciara, is available for a Zoom or phone call to answer your specific questions and to work with you to make this program a reality in your community.

Things we can help with:

Developing marketing materials (flyers, social media posts, etc.)

Making connections with potential community partners

Outreach and publicity planning

Developing a ticketing system

Creating movie materials (programs, tickets, slideshow, etc.)

Volunteer training

Trouble-shooting

And more!

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us!! Even if you don't require additional assistance, we would love to know that you're starting up a program. It is our hope to build a nationwide directory of dementia friendly movies.

Please email ciara.dfservices@gmail.com