



**Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

## **NEW FRIENDS OVERVIEW**

*New Friends is supported by a grant from Bader Philanthropies.*

*New Friends replicates portions The Buddy Program at the Mesulam Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease Center of the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine*

### Program Objectives

- Provide an opportunity for individuals with mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's disease or related dementias (mentors) to mentor a health professional student and contribute to the training of future health care professionals.
- Educate students regarding mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's disease or related dementias.
- Improve students' communication skills and patterns when interacting with people living with dementia and other cognitive disorders.
- Increase students' awareness of skills and strengths that remain in diagnosed individuals.
- Provide the opportunity for students to see how someone responds to his or her own changing abilities.
- Familiarize students with care and support-related issues encountered by persons with mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's disease or related dementias and their families.

### Time Commitment

- Attend a 3-hour orientation on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, successful interactions with people with cognitive changes and the impact of the diagnosis on the person and the family.
- Commit 3 hours per month to New Friends. One-two hours are devoted to visits/activities, while the other one-two hours are dedicated to monthly debriefing meetings led by University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health faculty and/or New Friends staff. Debriefing meetings will include educational presentations.
- Complete an activity journal immediately following visits with mentors and send it to New Friends staff.
- Complete a program evaluation.

New Friends runs from October or November through April or May. Each participant is asked to commit to the entire program.

### Application and Selection Process

Students must submit an application to be considered for the program. Admittance into New Friends is a selective process and students are interviewed by program staff to determine whether the student is able to make the necessary time commitment to the program.

### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

New Friends is approved by the Education and Social/Behavioral Science Institutional Review Board at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Students must sign a consent form prior to their involvement in New Friends. Program faculty are conducting research on program outcomes for the students.

### Matching

Program faculty facilitate the best match possible based on compatibility of interests, logistical concerns, and demographic preferences. We will coordinate a time for students and mentors to meet.



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### Orientation

There will be an obligatory 3-hour orientation for students led by New Friends staff. This orientation will cover the etiology, progression and treatment of the various types of dementia, as well as practical information on communication, caregiving, and the subjective experience of dementia. The orientation will also include an overview of family issues.

Following completion of the orientation, mentors and their family members/caregivers will meet with students and program staff. Here, the students and mentors will meet each other for the first time. Family members will also get to know the student, as they often facilitate the visits.

### Photographs

Photographs will be requested. Photos will later be given to students as a memento of their program experience. A digital copy of the photographs will be retained indefinitely by New Friends staff. Photographs may also be used for teaching, publications or presentations at meetings. No other personal information will be included.

### Activities

Meetings and appropriate activities will be determined by the mentor, the family and the student. Matched pairs will be provided with a handout of ideas of things they might do together. New Friends staff will also be available for suggestions. Examples of activities include (virtual) visits to museums, enjoying hobbies together, exercising, or just engaging in simple conversation.

### End of Year Celebration

An end-of-the-year-meeting will be scheduled in April or May and based upon the student's class and exam schedules. This party will be a celebration of their time together and a chance for the pairs to share their experiences with others if they so choose.

### Activity Expenses

Expenses for activities and transportation are the responsibility of each student.

### Activity Journal

Students are required to complete an activity journal at the end of each visit/activity. Journal forms will be provided to students. Completed forms should be e-mailed within 24 hours of each activity to Bonnie Nuttkinson, [bnuttkin@medicine.wisc.edu](mailto:bnuttkin@medicine.wisc.edu).

### Monthly Process Meetings between Students and Program Staff

Students are required to attend monthly hour-long process meetings with fellow students and program staff to discuss their experiences. Education topics will be presented at these meetings.

### Professional Guidance

New Friends staff will offer guidance throughout the program and are available to answer any questions/concerns that might occur while engaging in activities.



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### Evaluation

All students will be asked to complete a program evaluation form at program end. Annual updates on further education or career paths may also be requested to evaluate the program.

### Special Considerations

Students are free to withdraw from New Friends at any time, for any reason. If a student withdraws from New Friends, they will be asked to complete an exit interview, submit a written letter to program staff and verbally communicate to their mentor and family/caregiver that they will no longer participating in the program.

In terms of the research component of New Friends, if a student wishes to withdraw from the study they may do so and “take back” (revoke) the informed consent at any time. Even if they revoke the consent, New Friends may still use or share information that was obtained about the participant before they revoked their consent as needed for the purpose of this study.

### Contact Information

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