

The Westfield News

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Town employees attend Dementia Training

🕒 April 17, 2017 👤 Greg Fitzpatrick 📁 Health, SWK/Hilltowns 💬 Leave a comment

SOUTHWICK – On Friday morning, a number of Southwick town employees and residents gathered at the land use room at the Southwick Town Hall for a dementia training that was hosted by Armbrook Village. The training went from 9:30 a.m. and ended at 11:30 a.m.

Beth Cardillo, the Executive Director of Armbrook Village, and Julie Waniewski, the Director of Community Relations, were the instructors for the training.

The two instructors had the participants engage in an exercise that would help them directly understand what it’s like to have Dementia.

With four different stations, the town employees and residents were broken up into four different groups and took turns experiencing a different effect from Dementia.

At one station, participants had beans in one of their shoes, which meant that someone with Dementia could have Diabetic Neuropathy. Having gloves on their hands in another station was to experience what it’s like to have arthritis.



Town employees and residents go through an exercise during the Dementia training on Friday morning. (Photo by Greg Fitzpatrick)

Glasses were also worn at a station so people could experience the impact of having macular degeneration or cataracts. Ear plugs were worn to hamper their hearing and a radio was on to create extra noise for a distraction.

Cardillo felt that the exercise was important in order for everyone to get a better sense of what people with dementia go through on a daily basis.

“It’s just a chance for people to feel a little bit confused,” said Cardillo. “Usually the take away is that people are feeling very frustrated.”

Cindy Sullivan, the Council on Aging Director for the Town of Southwick, found it worthwhile taking part in the training.



Town employees are seen going through one station of the exercise that Armbrook Village instructed. (Photo by Greg Fitzpatrick)

"I think it will create more empathy for people coming in," said Sullivan.

Sullivan was also pleased to see a diverse representation from the town.

"I love that there's a cross-section of the town here," said Sullivan.

Select Board Administrative Assistant Cindy Pendleton, has a personal experience with dementia, as her father passed away from the brain disease.

"Nothing he did was easy," said Pendleton. "To have all those things

built up in your body, makes for every day you live a challenge."

According to Cardillo, Armbrook Village has been doing dementia training for the past three years. Senior Living Residences, who is the company that owns Armbrook Village, has 14 different communities in Western Massachusetts that are dementia friendly.

"They have really taken the initiative to do this for other communities," said Cardillo. "They have really taken a lead role."

After the exercise was finished, Cardillo and Waniewski showed the participants a power point presentation that gave them more information on the brain disease.