



### **GSV Program for February, 2018**

On Saturday, February 24, Marla Lahat, a social worker and executive director of Home Care Partners as well as a longtime Stonegate resident, presented a program on memory loss as we age. She reassured us that a little forgetfulness is normal and that concern should come only when cognitive impairment becomes severe enough to interfere with daily life. Such cognitive impairment or dementia (to use an umbrella term for different conditions) is irreversible, though it can at times be slowed. It involves much more than memory loss and affects focus, reasoning, behavior, personality, and communications, among other things. It manifests itself in many ways too, such as wandering, getting lost, rummaging, aggression, agitation, paranoia, delusions.

Marla urged anyone with cognitive problems to seek a professional diagnosis, not only to identify the exact condition but also to rule out causes that are treatable, such as over medication or depression. She also gave us a framework to use if dealing with someone who has dementia. One approach is the ABC model, in which one figures out what triggers (A, the antecedent) a particular reaction (B, the behavior) and the consequences (C) in order to avoid such incidents in the future. Another good approach is validation, in which you recognize and respond to the feelings of the person, but do not try to correct or dispute statements of "fact." Distraction and diversion are other ways to work with someone.

There are many resources available for dealing with dementia, which Marla urged us to use. She concluded with a brief description of Blue Zones, those locations worldwide that have the longest life spans and the least dementia. They all share in common an active life, plant-based diets, spirituality, family and social connections, a purpose and involvement outside oneself. She praised Greater Stonegate Village for providing opportunities for those in the community to stay connected and involved.