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Arts & Aging Partnership to premier play written by local playwright

“Memory of a Dance” tells story of dementia, family set in Southwest Michigan

ST. JOSEPH — The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is excited to announce the next event of the Arts & Aging Partnership of Southwest Michigan, “Memory of a Dance.”

The play, written by up-and-coming playwright Terry Guest, and performed by local actors, tells the story of an intergenerational family in Southwest Michigan.

“Memory of a Dance is a powerful representation of the complexities of navigating the journey of a family impacted by a dementia diagnosis,” said Christine Vanlandingham, AAA chief executive officer.

The play was developed in part based on input from residents of Southwest Michigan who are living with a dementia diagnosis.

“The candor of the advisors on this project who themselves are living with dementia shaped this play in powerful ways,” says Vanlandingham. “Terry Guest is an exceptional playwright. His skills combined with the real-life experience of people living with dementia and their care partners is a recipe for a moving experience. It’s one not to be missed.”

“Memory of a Dance” will premiere at 7 p.m. April 21, and 2 p.m. April 22 and 23 at the Campus for Creative Aging, 2920 Lakeview Ave., St. Joseph, and 2 p.m. April 29 at the Hanson Theater at Lake Michigan College, 1100 Yore Ave., Benton Harbor.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$12 for students. Tickets can be purchased online at www.campusforcreativeaging.org/classes.

The community organizations that make up the Arts and Aging Partnership include Area Agency on Aging, the Campus for Creative Aging, Lake Michigan College, the GhostLight Theatre, Twin City Players, and the Berrien Community Foundation.

The Arts & Aging Partnership was created in 2022 to harness the power of the arts to inform and engage the community and impact public health.

“The arts are a powerful vehicle for exploring social issues,” Vanlandingham said. “Experiencing a play together, exploring the paths of others, and engaging in dialogue around issues of aging opens opportunities for the community to better understand the journey of individuals living with dementia and destigmatizes the conversation. If we can talk about it, we can better understand and support each other across the lifespan.”

"Memory of a Dance" is possible in part by a grant from the Berrien Community Foundation.

This show is directed by Paul Mow, General Manager for the GhostLight Theatre.

“I am so grateful to have spent the past couple of years working within this new partnership to bring this piece of devised theatre to life,” Mow said. “Working with both the dementia groups and others who have shared with us their stories has been so didactic and rewarding for me personally, I simply can't wait for the audiences of Southwest Michigan to hear them as well. Playwright (and Jeff Award-winner) Terry Guest has done a remarkable job of writing ‘Memory of a Dance’ in order to reflect the universality of dementia, and that it can truly affect each and every one of us no matter our race, gender, or economic status.”

The show stars Carol Sizer, Bill Klein, Lauren Scott, and Chokwe Pitchford.

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About Region IV Area Agency on Aging

Region IV Area Agency on Aging is a private, not-for-profit corporation. Established in 1974 for the business of developing age supportive commerce and services, it plays a major role in planning, funding, and delivery of a host of services. Empowerment and independence of community members are driving themes behind its efforts. Designated by the State of Michigan to receive federal Older Americans Act funds for planning and development, the agency manages an array of government contracts for service delivery in southwest Michigan. Its primary service area includes Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. For more information about the RIVAAA, visit www.areaagencyonaging.org