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Dance floor THERAPY



Rosener House first in U.S. to host French tango program for Alzheimer's patients

Story by Chris Kenrick
Photos by Veronica Weber

When Barbara Kalt invited a team of French researchers to bring an experimental therapeutic tango program to Menlo Park's Rosener House earlier this year, she wasn't sure whether the dance steps would help improve the cognition, gait and balance in participants with Alzheimer's disease. She hoped,

at the very least, that it might make the lives of those who use the adult day care facility more fun and interesting. Either way, the program would be a win-win, figured Kalt, the director of Rosener House at the time.

"Everybody hears about all the failures of the new drugs for people with Alzheimer's, but we're just kind of moving forward with non-drug interventions and trying to improve the lives of people living with

Alzheimer's and dementia," said Kalt.

In April, the team of French researchers brought its therapeutic tango program, Caravan of Memory, to Rosener House as part of a study on motor function in people with Alzheimer's disease. The Menlo Park facility is the first venue in the nation, and among only seven outside of France, to participate in the dance study.

Launched in France 10 years

ago, the tango program has been used in institutions in at least eight French cities, where it's being measured by France Mourey, a researcher at the University of Burgundy. Tango uses movements of everyday life — balance, weight transfer, support and posture — and is thought to have more therapeutic advantages than other dance forms, according to the study's researchers.

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Barbara Kalt of Menlo Park, who was instrumental in bringing the tango program to the Rosener House, retired this spring after a decadeslong career at the adult day care center, operated by the Peninsula Volunteers. Look for our story spotlighting Barbara, her achievements and her thoughts about providing care for the elderly, coming soon.



Above: Volunteers and participants in the Rosener House tango study warm up together in a circle before beginning their hour-long weekly dance session at the Menlo Park center. Top: Reg R. dances with volunteer Margaret Kim in the Rosener House's new tango program for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.