



**For immediate release**

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## **Award-winning therapeutic program at Touchmark helps residents living with dementia**

APPLETON, Wis. – A scent, a color, even a familiar process can trigger memories for individuals living with Alzheimer’s disease or other dementia. Thanks to a new program at Touchmark on West Prospect, residents are using all their senses to enhance memory.

The program, called Fragrance in Frames, combines art therapy with essential oils to provide natural health and mood benefits to those living with forms of dementia. Different essential oils are used to create different desired outcomes, which staff use during one-on-one painting sessions with residents. The idea was born from Touchmark’s Vice President of Clinical Services, Wendy Schrag, RN-BC, and piloted in a Touchmark community in Bismarck, North Dakota.

The program has been active at Touchmark in Appleton for about two years and in that time has grown in attendance. Pam Murphy is the Life Enrichment/Wellness Coordinator in memory care at Touchmark and says the scents are as intellectually stimulating as music.

“In our most recent session, we painted turkeys, which triggered a discussion about Thanksgiving. We were using a harvest spice essential oil and had apple cinnamon bread baking in the kitchen at the same time. The mix of familiar smells triggered all sorts of holiday memories,” Murphy said.

Before each painting session, a team member shares the essential oil with the resident to ensure it evokes a pleasant response. A few drops of the selected oil is then mixed into the paint.

During the pilot program in Bismarck, Touchmark staff tracked residents’ responses in the electronic medical record system every shift to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between painting with essential oils and residents’ behaviors and outlook. They observed decreased agitation, increased attention span and expanded social engagement.

Prior to beginning the class, one resident had 27 exit-seeking episodes per month. Over a three-month period while participating in Fragrance in Frames, these episodes

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diminished to only five. His aggressive behavior disappeared entirely, and he became very engaged. He now loves to reminisce with staff.

At Touchmark on West Prospect, program leaders fill out an assessment to track each individuals' daily behaviors, demeanor, verbal ability, and engagement level. But Murphy says the most visible change is in the participants' signatures. She asks each person to sign their name before and after Fragrance in Frames painting sessions.

“Some might not be able to write their name at all, but afterwards the signature is clear and doesn't look like the same signature,” Murphy said. “The program relaxes individuals and helps them focus, so it's obviously triggering something in their brain.”

The Fragrance in Frames program won a 2017 Innovators Award from the International Council on Active Aging (ICAA). The ICAA Innovators Awards were created to honor those in the active-aging industry who are leading the way, setting new standards and making a difference in the lives of older adults. Eligible offerings can target any or all of the seven wellness dimensions endorsed by ICAA — social, emotional, vocational, spiritual, intellectual, physical and environmental.

“This award is fundamentally about giving accolades to organizations that push creative boundaries in devising and delivering programs for older adults,” says ICAA CEO Colin Milner. “For 15 years, our awards program has spotlighted initiatives that inspire and impress us with creativity and excellence. Recipients such as Touchmark serve as inspiring models for any organization that seeks to support older-adult wellness.”

More information about Touchmark is available at [Touchmark.com](https://www.touchmark.com).

### **About Touchmark on West Prospect**

Touchmark on West Prospect is a full-service retirement community with options in active living that include single-family homes, apartments, independent living, assisted living, CBRF-level assisted living and memory care. The community spans nearly 40 acres and is conveniently located across from the Butte des Morts Country Club, a five-minute drive from the Fox River Mall off Highway 41. For more information, visit [Touchmark.com](https://www.touchmark.com).

### **About Touchmark**

Touchmark has been a leader in retirement living for more than 35 years. Currently, there are 11 communities in eight states and a Canadian province. Two more communities are under construction in the U.S. All Touchmark communities offer a continuum of services through multiple levels of licensed care, supporting residents to their highest level of independence. Visit [Touchmark.com](https://www.touchmark.com) for more information.

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