

Deborah Seelhoff, Recognized By Influential Women, Serves As Founder And Owner Of Dementia Forward LLC

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Transforming Dementia Care Through
Education, Advocacy, and a
Relationship-Centered Approach That
Honors Dignity and Human Connection

Deborah Seelhoff is a passionate dementia care advocate, educator, and Certified Dementia Practitioner dedicated to transforming the way individuals, families, and care partners understand and support people living with dementia. As the Founder and Owner of Dementia Forward LLC in Waterford, Michigan, Deborah provides education, training, and personalized guidance designed to bridge the gap between clinical knowledge and practical, relationship-centered care.



Through her work, Deborah focuses on helping care partners and families recognize the person behind the diagnosis and create environments where individuals living with dementia can experience dignity, purpose, connection, and moments of joy. Her approach centers on moving beyond task-based caregiving and toward meaningful relationships that honor the individuality, history, and humanity of every person.

Deborah's passion for dementia care developed through firsthand experience managing a small memory-care group home, where she witnessed the challenges faced by both caregivers and families. She recognized that many care partners lacked access to practical dementia education and that families often needed additional support in understanding how to navigate the complexities of the condition.

Seeing the need for more effective and compassionate education, Deborah founded Dementia Forward LLC to provide hands-on training for care partners, family education programs, and individualized consultations. Her mission is to empower caregivers with the tools, confidence, and understanding needed to provide better support while improving the overall experience for individuals living with dementia.

In addition to her work through Dementia Forward, Deborah extends her impact through partnerships with organizations such as Right at Home Oakland Macomb, where she serves as a dementia educator contractor providing both in-person and video-based training. Through these efforts, she continues to expand access to practical education that helps professionals and families approach dementia care with greater confidence and compassion.

Deborah attributes her success to her belief that people learn in three ways: by seeing, by hearing, and by doing. She believes that while traditional dementia training, such as periodic videos or informational sessions, can provide valuable knowledge, it does not always create the deeper understanding needed to transform caregiving.

When Deborah works with care partners, she does not simply explain what they should do. She demonstrates approaches and helps them experience what it can feel like to navigate the world from the perspective of someone living with dementia. Whether working in person or virtually, she creates opportunities for caregivers to gain practical insight through methods such as The Positive Physical Approach™ (PPA) and Hand-under-Hand®.

These experiences allow caregivers to move beyond simply learning techniques and begin understanding the emotions, needs, and perspectives of the individuals they support.

Deborah believes caregivers should be empowered and recognized for the important work they do every day. She emphasizes that when care partners focus on building relationships, the entire caregiving experience changes. The work becomes more meaningful, stress can decrease, and individuals living with dementia often feel safer, more respected, and more understood.

Through Positive Approach to Care (PAC)®, Deborah teaches caregivers to shift away from task-focused care and toward person-centered connection. She believes that when care becomes centered only on completing tasks, there is a risk of unintentionally reducing autonomy and overlooking the empathy and humanity that should guide every interaction.

For Deborah, care is not simply a task—it is a relationship.

Through her presentations and educational programs, Deborah creates moments of awareness that help participants better understand dementia from the perspective of those experiencing it. By encouraging reflection and empathy, she helps caregivers recognize how communication, body language, and daily interactions can influence the lives of people living with dementia.

When working with families, Deborah approaches each conversation with compassion and reassurance. She reminds them that they are doing the best they can based on the knowledge they currently have, and that gaining new understanding provides an opportunity to provide even stronger support.

She helps families recognize that dementia is an evolving condition, and as their loved one's needs change, relationships, communication strategies, and care approaches must evolve as well.

The guidance that has shaped Deborah's career has largely come from trusting herself and following her own instincts. She believes her journey has been defined by listening to her inner voice rather than following traditional expectations.

Earlier in life, Deborah was encouraged not to pursue dance in university because of concerns about financial stability. However, she chose to follow her passion, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts and dancing with a company. Those experiences helped her develop the ability to connect with others, communicate beyond words, and understand the importance of human expression.

At the time, Deborah did not realize how those skills would later influence her work in dementia care. Her path eventually led her to supporting older adults and individuals living with dementia, where she discovered a deeper sense of purpose.

What began as professional work became something deeply personal. The stories, experiences, vulnerability, and humanity of those living with dementia remained with her and became the foundation of the work she continues today.

Deborah encourages young women entering dementia care to pursue education, remain curious, and always view care through the perspective of the individual living with dementia. She believes professionals must look beyond tasks, schedules, and diagnoses and return to the person at the center of care.

She emphasizes that people living with dementia have lived full and meaningful lives. They are not defined by their diagnosis, and while the way they communicate may change, their identity, emotions, and need for connection remain.

Deborah believes individuals living with dementia communicate valuable information every day through their actions, words, and expressions. Care partners must slow down, remain present, and truly listen in order to understand what they are communicating.

She also encourages professionals to advocate for stronger dementia education and higher standards throughout healthcare and senior care fields. She believes meaningful change

requires commitment, courage, and a willingness to stand up for individuals who may not always have the ability to advocate for themselves.

For Deborah, dementia care is not about managing behaviors—it is about building relationships, protecting dignity, and recognizing the person who remains.

She believes that when caregivers choose relationships over tasks, they do more than improve care; they transform the experience of being human.

Deborah recognizes that dementia care continues to face significant challenges, including fragmented systems, low caregiver pay, high staff turnover, and limited dementia education among memory-care professionals, first responders, and other senior care providers, including hospice, wound care, social work, and in-home care professionals.

She believes many families struggle to find reliable information and support, especially during urgent situations when decisions must be made quickly. Without proper education and preparation, families may rely on limited information when choosing care options for their loved ones.

Deborah emphasizes the importance of planning ahead, asking meaningful questions, and understanding what quality dementia care should look like before a crisis occurs.

She believes the greatest opportunities in dementia care involve expanding accessible education through hands-on training, video-based programs, and stronger professional standards. By creating more relationship-focused care models, communities can ensure individuals living with dementia receive support that recognizes their dignity, purpose, and individuality.

The values guiding Deborah's work and personal life are empathy, dignity, and respect for every individual. She strives to honor relationships, support autonomy, and help people living with dementia experience purpose and meaning each day.

Her approach is rooted in compassion and a commitment to seeing the whole person rather than focusing solely on a diagnosis. Deborah believes every individual deserves patience, understanding, and respect.

Her faith and gratitude also influence how she approaches life and her work, reminding her to remain present, approach others without judgment, and recognize the small moments of connection that bring meaning to everyday experiences.

Through her dedication, advocacy, and educational initiatives, Deborah Seelhoff continues to transform dementia care by equipping families and care partners with the knowledge, confidence, and skills needed to navigate the journey with greater understanding and compassion. Through Dementia Forward LLC, she continues building a future where dementia

care is guided by connection, dignity, and the recognition of the person who has always been there.

Learn More about Deborah Seelhoff:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/Deborah-Seelhoff> or through her website, <https://www.dementiaforward.com/>

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