

MEMORY KEEPERS MEDICAL DISCOVERY TEAM

ISSUE 08 | Fall 2026



Photo: Fall scenery in Two Harbors submitted by Community Based Researcher, Kirsten Cruikshank

CERDAR

The Center for Community Engaged Rural Dementia and Alzheimer's Research

A deeper look into CERDAR and what we are trying to accomplish with our community members. In this issue, you will meet more members of our team and get updates on our work.

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COORDINATOR'S UPDATE

AMY OTTO, PHD

Senior Research Associate

Fall is well on its way as the leaves turn bright red and yellow across northern Minnesota! 2026 has been a busy year for the CERDAR team, with several Brain Train events and Round Table discussions that have resulted in meaningful connections, fruitful conversations, and have planted the seeds for future collaborations.

Our community engagement team continues to travel across northern Minnesota to connect with community members, partners, and local care and service providers to help plan these events and distribute helpful information to attendees. In November, we are excited to host another Brain Train on the Iron Range!

Back in the office, we have been busy writing applications for several grants that could support future research projects studying aging and brain health in rural northern Minnesota, as well as grants that could support additional Brain Train and Round Table events! Additionally, our research team has been analyzing data that came out of our CERDAR pilot projects, and we're working on several manuscripts for publication. We look forward to building upon these pilot projects to continue learning more about memory loss, understanding the connection between access to care and place, and strategies to encourage healthy brain aging for you and your loved ones.

Lastly, and most importantly, in August our team lost an amazing family member, friend, colleague, and leader, Dr. Wayne Warry. You can read more about Wayne on the next page. He will be deeply missed. We will honor his legacy and his dedication to rural health by continuing the important work that he started here at CERDAR.

As always, we are so grateful to our community partners, research participants, faculty and staff, and you for your dedication to our mission.



IN MEMORY OF DR. WAYNE WARRY

Professor Emeritus
Director of Rural Health Initiatives



We are deeply saddened to share that our coworker and friend, Dr. Wayne Warry, passed away the morning of August 4, 2026, leaving behind an enduring legacy of community-engaged scholarship, health equity advocacy, and dedicated mentorship across Canada and the United States.

A medical anthropologist, Dr. Warry served as the Director of Rural Health Initiatives for Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team (MK-MDT) and made significant contributions to MK-MDT over the last 9 years before his retirement in May of 2026.

Dr. Warry has been a cornerstone of the MK-MDT leadership since its inception. In our early years, he helped shape our Indigenous dementia research program, and soon after, he launched the rural Alzheimer's disease and related dementias research program, CERDAR. He had early success with National Institute of Health funding, and contributed as a co-investigator on several projects. He built community relationships in northern rural Minnesota and recruited our first members of the rural community advisory group. Moreover, he has been a strong leader in building the MK-MDT into what it is today.

Throughout his career, Dr. Warry was a steadfast advocate for community-based participatory research and Indigenous rights.

He helped fundamentally shift research paradigms—being among the first to advocate for authentic collaborations with Indigenous communities and supporting them as leaders in their own research. Dr. Warry's scholarship bridged the gap between anthropological theory, community health, and health policy.

Beyond his publications and research leadership, Dr. Warry was a beloved teacher and mentor. Colleagues and students remember him for his generosity, intellectual rigor, and unwavering commitment to ethical, community-led research. His work leaves a lasting footprint on how rural and Indigenous health research is conducted across North America—built on respect, reciprocity, and health equity.

Dr. Warry is survived by his children, David and Lilah, and his beloved wife, collaborator, and colleague, Dr. Kristen Jacklin, with whom he shared both a life and a transformative vision for Indigenous and rural health research. He is also remembered by his “work family” at the Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team and an extensive international network of colleagues, community partners, and former students whose lives and careers he deeply enriched.

Dr. Wayne Warry will be greatly missed by everyone who had the pleasure of working with him.

BRAIN TRAINS!

In the last newsletter we highlighted a new interactive event focused on brain health and raising awareness of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, called Brain Trains. Throughout the winter and spring we were able to work with community partners to co-host two more Brain Trains.

What is a Brain Train?

A Brain Train is an event that creates a welcoming space with interactive stations staffed by dementia researchers, local organizations, and healthcare professionals.

- Community members visit each interactive station and collect information on dementia and healthy aging.
- Brain Trains are organized in collaboration with local agencies and service providers.
- Stopping at each station is incentivized by opportunities for prizes!

ITASCA COUNTY BRAIN TRAIN

April 16, 2026

Cohasset Community Center

Cohasset, MN



- 72 individuals registered for the event.
- 15 interactive stations were available focusing on healthy aging, dementia, mind-body connection, legal services, and other local programs and services.
- 2 presentations were featured:
 - ***Rural Community-Based Participatory Research*** with Josh Fergen, PhD, Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team
 - ***Resources for Legal Services and Aging*** with Kristin Parendo, Justice North
- **Graphic Recorder at Reframe Ideas**, Nelle Rhicard, MS, captured the event through her artistry!
- After attending the event, **86.8%** of participants reported that they would be interested in participating in a dementia research study in the future, compared to **72.9%** prior to attending.



PRESENTATION: LEGAL SERVICES AND AGING



PRESENTATION: RURAL COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH



MK-MDT BRAIN TRAIN TEAM AND STATION HOSTS

Itasca County Brain Train Stations



**MEMORY KEEPERS MEDICAL
DISCOVERY TEAM**



**COMMUNITY ENGAGED RURAL DEMENTIA AND
ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH**



CHECK OUT STATION



ELDERCIRCLE



GOMART!



REFRAME IDEAS



FAIRVIEW



JUSTICE NORTH



GRAND RAPIDS YMCA



MINNESOTA AGING PATHWAYS



ITASCA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH



FAIRVIEW



GRAND ITASCA HOSPITAL AND CLINIC



ITASCA AREA COMMUNITY EDUCATION



UMN BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

NORTH SHORE BRAIN TRAIN

May 14, 2026

Aspirus Lake View Clinic and Hospital
Two Harbors, MN



- **62** individuals registered for the event.
- **14** interactive stations were available focusing on healthy aging, dementia, mind-body connection, legal services, and information about local programs and services.
- Jenna Pogorels, MSW, LICSW (Associate Director of Community Services - Alzheimer's Association) presented ***"Aging Well: Brain Health as We Age"***
- **Graphic Recorder** at Reframe Ideas, Nelle Rhicard, MS, captured the event through her artistry!



MK-MDT BRAIN TRAIN TEAM AND GRAPHIC RECORDER NELLE RHICARD



PRESENTATION: AGING WELL: BRAIN HEALTH AS WE AGE



BRAIN TRAIN AUDIENCE

- **75% reported that they would change something in their life after the event** such as increasing exercise, reducing alcohol consumption, improving diet, or participating in more social events.
- After attending the event, participants rated their interest level in participating in dementia research on a scale from 1-10: on average participants rated their willingness as **7.64** compared to **6.45** prior to the event.

North Shore Brain Train Stations



ASPIRUS LAKE VIEW



ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION



NORTH SHORE AREA PARTNERS- SILVER BAY



LAKE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICES OFFICE



MEMORY KEEPERS MEDICAL DISCOVERY TEAM



LAKE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



ASPIRUS LAKE VIEW - NUTRITION DEPARTMENT



TWO HARBORS AND SILVER BAY LIBRARIES



CARDINAL COMFORT CARE COOPERATIVE



ARROWHEAD TRANSIT



JUSTICE NORTH



MN VETERANS HOME



COMMUNITY PARTNERS - TWO HARBORS



ARROWHEAD AAA- MN AGING PATHWAYS

Coming soon... Iron Range Brain Train!
Nov 17, 2026 at the MN Discovery Center in Chisholm, MN

ROUND TABLES

A Round Table event is a facilitated conversation designed to foster a community of practice among local health care and service providers with a focus on dementia care. Specific goals include:

- Connecting with community health care providers
- Exchanging information about research and community needs
- Identifying needs and interests related to rural dementia research
- Developing new research relationships
- Encouraging ongoing dialogue among community health care providers

THIEF RIVER FALLS ROUND TABLE NOVEMBER 18, 2025



Three individuals attended the event, including a local clinic manager and two public health nurses. Participants focused on 3 key research areas related to their community needs:

- The relationship between exposure to agriculture inputs (e.g., fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides) to dementia diagnosis or onset
- Solutions to dementia care barriers (staffing, home health, transportation)
- How to increase cognitive screenings and understand and navigate reservations about screenings

Next steps:

Memory Keepers will continue to foster these relationships, maintaining a community of practice by keeping participants up to date on future events, research efforts, and feedback from other round tables.

ITASCA COUNTY ROUND TABLE JUNE 10, 2026



Eleven individuals attended the event, including family practice doctors, nurse practitioners, a speech language pathologist, a local educator and medical students. Participants noted 4 key research areas related to their community needs:

- Stronger evidence around dementia treatments
- How respite care helps with health outcomes
- Interventions for those living with dementia who are living alone
- Community education for caregivers and family members without dementia

Featured in the next newsletter issue...North Shore Round Table
Held on August 13, 2026 in Two Harbors

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

It is our goal to continually engage with folks living in rural communities

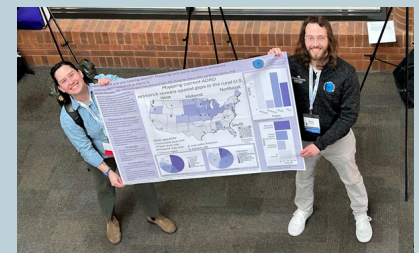
In 2025 CERDAR Team engaged in **61 rurally focused community events and meetings!**

In 2026, we are continuing to attend in person and virtual events including:

- Community Advisory Group Meetings
- Age Friendly Meetings
- Caregiver Listening Sessions
- Itasca County and North Shore Brain Trains
- Itasca County Round Table
- North Shore Round Table
- Day at the Capitol for Alzheimer's
- Student outreach at Carleton College

Team members have presented at:

- UMN Public Engagement Conference
- Minnesota Gerontological Society Conference
- Rural Sociological Society Conference



JOIN US AT THE FOLLOWING EVENTS!

WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S

Range Area
September 19, 2026
MN Discovery Center
Chisholm, MN



Twin Ports Area
October 3, 2026
DECC
Duluth, MN



Iron Range Brain Train!
Nov 17, 2026
MN Discovery Center
Chisholm, MN



TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

Each issue will highlight different members of the CERDAR team

KELLY CAMPBELL

FAREWELL AND THANK YOU!

Community Advisory Group Member

Kelly Campbell, former Community Health Coordinator at Grand Itasca Clinic and Hospital, has served on the CERDAR Community Advisory Group (CAG) since its inception. Kelly has announced her retirement, and will enjoy spending more time with her grandchildren.

Kelly's contributions to the CERDAR CAG ensured perspectives and participants from the western Iron Range were included in CERDAR research and community events. She invited us to engagement opportunities which furthered our connection to western Iron Range service providers, caregivers, and people living with dementia. In her last hurrah she advocated for and helped immensely in the coordination of the Itasca County Brain Train. This event connected and brought information to 72 individuals, which helped us continue to foster a community of care.

**Thank you Kelly for your contributions to CERDAR, and
dedication to improving the quality of life for rural
Minnesotans impacted by dementia. You will be missed! Enjoy
a much deserved retirement!**



Photos (left to right): Kelly with CERDAR Team members at: Walk Around the Block for Alzheimer's, Grand Rapids Health Fair, and Itasca County Brain Train

YOUR RESEARCH TEAM

Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team

Investigators:

- Kristen Jacklin, PhD
- Emily Onello, MD
- Cliff Whetung, PhD, MSW

UMN Medical School, Duluth Campus:

- Amy Greminger, MD
- Catherine McCarty, PhD, MPH
- Sandra Stover, MD

UMN School of Public Health:

- Joseph E. Gaugler, PhD
- Carrie Henning-Smith, PhD, MPH, MSW

UMN School of Nursing:

- Dereck Salisbury, PhD

Collaborators:

- Stephen Waring, DVM, PhD, FACE- *Principal Scientist, Essentia Institute of Rural Health*

Rural Advisor in Residence:

- Shawn McMahon, MD

Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team

Staff:

- Amanda Bergman, BS
- Melissa Blind, PhD
- Patrick Bright, MA
- Wyatt Cheney, MS
- Kirsten Cruikshank, MSW, LGSW
- Melinda Dertinger, MA
- Josh Fergen, PhD
- Kelsie Larson, MPH, RDN
- Brooke Metz, MA, MS
- Maggie Noun, MSW, LGSW
- Amy Otto, PhD
- Lysie Radovich, PhD
- Sung Han Rhew, PhD
- Natalya Walker-Muller, BA

Community Advisory Group:

Northwest:

- Karen Bedeau- *Dementia Outreach Advocate, Northwoods Caregivers*
- Lora Bertelsen, PhD, LP, SEP- *Counseling Psychologist*
- Val Mattison- *Program Developer, Dancing Sky Area Agency on Aging (AAA)*
- Jody Peterson- *Informal supporter for caregivers*
- Rita Poulton- *Former Caregiver and Business Manager*

Northeast:

- Marcia Grahek- *Retired RN Supervisor, community volunteer*
- Jenna Pogorels, MSW, LICSW- *Senior Program Manager, Minnesota-North Dakota Chapter, Alzheimer's Association*
- David Popilek- *Caregiver and Performer*
- Gina Urbick, BS- *Grants Manager, Arrowhead AAA*

Rural Research Advisory Group:

- Terry J. Hill, MPA- *Executive Director, Rural Health Innovations, Senior Advisor for Rural Health Leadership and Policy, National Rural Health Resource Center, Duluth*
- Kristi Kane- *Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC)*
- Kasey Kapella, MD- *Gerontologist, Fairview Virginia Clinic*
- Megan O'Connell, PhD- *Department of Psychology Rural Dementia Action Research (RADAR) Centre, Rural and Remote Memory Clinic, University of Saskatchewan College of Arts and Science*
- Heather Pender- *Aging Program Director, Dancing Sky AAA*



**CERDAR is made possible and continues to be supported by
Memory Keepers Medical Discovery Team**

**Join the CERDAR Community for newsletters and to participate in
our research!**

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CONTACT US



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