



AGI Art Therapist Karin Derouaux leading art therapy in the Activity Centre



*Enhancing the lives of everyone affected by or living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.*

## **AGI Annual Report 2022-2023**

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## Introduction

Alzheimer Groupe (A.G.I.) Inc. is a charitable organization that offers therapeutic programs to individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Additionally, AGI provides support services to families and professional caregivers, focusing on best practices in dementia care while sensitizing the community at large through education and awareness.

AGI has been serving the Montreal community for over 39 years. 95% of those seeking support services from AGI are Anglophones, and the organization is one of the few offering improved access to dementia care for this population. Increasingly, people understand that Alzheimer's disease affects the lives of us all.

The number of Canadians living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia is steadily increasing, placing pressure on caregivers and a strained healthcare system. In the recent *Landmark Study: Navigating the Path Forward For Dementia in Canada* (2022) completed by the Alzheimer's Society of Canada, the number of Canadians expected to be living with dementia presents a graver scenario than previously predicted. These recent findings show that:

- Dementia will continue to be a growing issue in Canada, with the number of people living with some form of dementia projected to triple over the next 30 years.
- 597,300 Canadians are currently living with dementia. Estimates show that by 2050, this number will reach close to 1.7 million (20,833 individuals diagnosed each month).
- An estimated 6.3 million Canadians will be diagnosed, living with and eventually dying of dementia over the next 30 years.
- Women with dementia will continue to outnumber men diagnosed with the disease.
- By the year 2050, more than 1 million Canadians will serve as care partners to people with dementia. The amount of care provided will total over 1.4 billion hours annually, which is equivalent to 690,000 full time jobs.

Given the aging population, 360,000 Quebecers will be living with some type of dementia by 2050, an increase of more than 145 percent from 2020.

AGI continues the fight to help families navigate the never-ending demands of the disease.

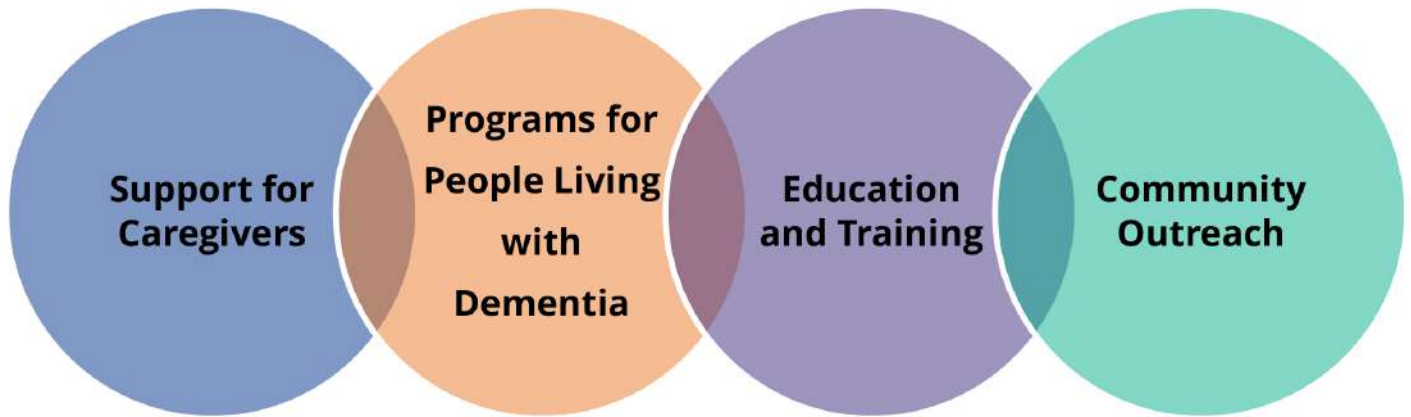
Every day, families reach out to AGI urgently seeking help. AGI's dedicated professionals provide practical solutions and support to these families in need.

AGI's approach to caregiving is founded on the premise that all individuals with dementia deserve an excellent quality of care characterized by joyful, loving interaction. This requires a deep understanding of the individual and their disease, a gentle and empathic approach to physical care, a concern for psychological and emotional functioning, and knowledge of appropriate intervention strategies.

AGI's professional support services team helps the entire family face a new reality with greater understanding of what can still be done and give them the hope that even through the progression of the disease, a life can be well lived.

## Introduction > continued

The foundation of AGI's work is based on the following four pillars:



## 2022-2023 Overview

At AGI, we continue to make a difference in the lives of people with dementia and caregivers in the Montreal community, driven by our unwavering commitment and person-centered approach.

While the impacts of the pandemic remained evident throughout the fiscal year of 2022-2023, the gradual easing of restrictions provided a window of opportunity to resume in-person activities and fundraising events. This step-by-step resumption of regular operations instilled a sense of hope and positivity.

The AGI team's devotion and determination remained strong as we re-opened under the health and safety protocols of physical distancing and capacity limitations set by the Brigade Santé Publique.

As COVID-19 restrictions were eased, the shift from online to in-person activities required a careful and gradual approach. AGI transitioned to a hybrid model to meet the needs of people living with dementia and their caregivers. Our experience has shown that each of these formats presents coinciding benefits and challenges:

Virtual services are more accessible, allowing individuals to engage from the comfort of their own home, without limitations such as transportation.

In-person activities require more effort on behalf of the client, resulting in increased social and physical fatigue. Despite these challenges, in-person interactions can facilitate more meaningful connections and careful observations of social cues, expressions and body language. For some, attending the AGI Activity Centre is their only social contact outside of their immediate care circle.

**2022-2023 Overview > continued**

Additionally, due to the high demand for AGI’s in-person services, families are offered virtual programs while they await placement into in-person activities.

AGI’s Music Therapy program continues to expand, as it is a valuable initiative that improves the quality of life of individuals living with dementia. AGI’s Board Certified Music Therapist meticulously designs each group and individual session to accommodate a diverse range of musical and cultural preferences, ensuring that musical experiences resonate with participants’ various backgrounds and cognitive capacities.

In the past year, AGI bridged the gap between therapeutic space and community by hosting two public group music events. The first was a virtual holiday event on December 14, 2022, with 48 participants in attendance. Holiday traditions and stories were shared between AGI staff members and songs were sung in the spirit of community connection. The second event took place on March 20, 2023, when AGI and participants of the centre’s Monday Group hosted a vernissage and concert. Five songs were performed for an audience of care partners and AGI staff. This performance was highlighted in AGI’s April 2023 Newsletter, demonstrating the camaraderie between and capabilities of participants.

Restoring regular routines has brought a feeling of comfort to staff and participants. By the end of the fiscal year, AGI’s Activity Centre had fully reinstated five in-person weekly groups. With the global reopening, AGI is continuously adapting programs and services to align with the needs of people living with dementia and caregivers.

From **July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023** - the following programs or activities were provided via telehealth, virtually or in-person:

Support for Caregivers	Programs for People Living with Dementia	Education and Training	Community Outreach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone Helpline</li> <li>• Email support</li> <li>• Individual and Family Counselling</li> <li>• Support Groups: Early Stage, Moderate to Late Stage</li> <li>• Therapeutic Yoga for Caregivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New client intake and assessments</li> <li>• Activity Centre</li> <li>• Movement Program</li> <li>• Sharing Sounds of Music Program</li> <li>• Individual music therapy sessions</li> <li>• Individual Art Therapy Sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dementia 101</li> <li>• Specialized courses</li> <li>• Dementia Training for Healthcare Professionals</li> <li>• AGI Webinar Series</li> <li>• AGI Awareness Webinar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach Presentations and Kiosks</li> <li>• National Caregiver’s Week</li> </ul>

## 1. Support for Caregivers

Providing individualized care to a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia requires significant resources on the part of the family caregiver. As dementia progresses, caregivers may find it increasingly difficult to run errands, complete daily household tasks, or to look after their own needs. Many find that they are alone in the caregiving process, isolated from family and friends. This is where AGI helps, providing relief and support.

### Telephone Helpline and Email Support

Experienced counsellors are available to answer questions and respond to urgent needs, Monday to Thursday from 9 am to 5 pm and Fridays from 9 am to 4 pm. In addition to addressing the concerns of caregivers, this helpline is available to those from the community at large who are in need of assistance. E-mail support is also provided.

→ 207 interactions through e-mail support.

→ 393 interactions through the telephone helpline, including 180 first-time callers.

### Individual and Family Counselling

AGI counselling services help individual and family caregivers with daily challenges related to dementia and to plan for the future. Counsellors provide relevant tools, information and resources.

→ 1,180 individual counselling sessions provided.

→ 24 family counselling sessions provided.

### Support Groups

Led by expert facilitators, caregivers are encouraged to support one another, share experiences and problem-solve in a non-judgmental, friendly environment.

Support Groups have been transitioned to a hybrid format. Furthermore, the two recurring spousal support groups have been customized to correspond to the stage of the disease.

#### ***Early Stage Support Group:***

→ 30 hours of support provided through 20 group sessions, averaging 7 caregivers per session.

#### ***Moderate to Late Stage Support Group:***

→ 28.5 hours of support provided through 19 group sessions, averaging 7 caregivers per session.

## Support for Caregivers > continued

### Therapeutic Yoga for Caregivers

The AGI Therapeutic Yoga for Caregivers program is offered through Zoom on a weekly basis. Each 45-minute session is aimed at self-care and provides an opportunity for caregivers to learn new movement and breathing techniques to help ease anxiety and stress. Caregivers can participate without cost in this program, which is led by an RYT-500 Liferforce Yoga Practitioner.

The aim of the program is to create resourceful, capable and informed caregivers who are empowered with the skills needed to provide support, as well as to become aware of their own self-care needs.

This program also goes further to support healthy aging, which includes physical fitness and the mental health of caregivers in the adaptation to their role.

→ 37 hours of support provided through 44 group sessions, averaging 6 caregivers per session.

## 2. Programs for People Living with Dementia

AGI offers a range of activity programs for the person with Alzheimer's or other dementias. AGI's therapeutic programs are tailored to the individual, enhancing abilities while compensating for challenges. These activities improve self-esteem by providing opportunities to experience feelings of pleasure, success and competence.

### New Client Intake and Assessment

Before a diagnosed individual can take part in AGI's programs, activities, and services, they meet with an AGI Recreation Therapist one-on-one. This allows the AGI Recreation Therapist, in consultation with the diagnosed individual and his/her caregiver, to develop a tailored program that addresses current needs. An AGI Counsellor will continue to support the family throughout the time that they are a client with the organization

→ 48 assessments were completed.

## **AGI Activity Centre**

AGI's Activity Centre offers the person living with dementia engaging activities while their family member benefits from respite. The centre honours each participant as a unique person beyond their diagnosis.

AGI's team of professional recreation therapists and activity facilitators tailor the activities to individual abilities in a caring, inclusive environment, enhancing the quality of life for those who attend. Programming focuses on providing participants with a sense of belonging, improved quality of life, a feeling of productivity and empowerment, an opportunity to participate in leisure activities, and social inclusion in interacting with their peers.

AGI offers virtual activity sessions for those unable to attend in-person programs. Sessions are led by a Recreation Therapist and Activity Program Facilitator with enrichments through contributions by Art and Music Therapists.

The composition of each group session varies depending on the interest and abilities of participants. Groups engage in a diverse range of activities to meet their cognitive, emotional and psychosocial needs. Each day, participants are offered an array of cognitive activities, art appreciation, art therapy, peer socialization, trivia, reminiscence, exercise, music appreciation and music therapy.

In addition to this, AGI has also introduced 30-minute individual sessions for those who require one-on-one support. Through individual sessions, activities are tailored to the person's needs and abilities. Often the person might be in the later stage of Alzheimer's Disease or dementia, or they have higher needs that cannot be facilitated through a group session.

### ***In-Person Group Sessions***

→ 200 in-person sessions attended by an average of 23 clients per week.

### ***Virtual Group Sessions***

→ 82 virtual sessions attended by 5 clients on average per week.

### ***Virtual Individual Sessions***

→ 216 sessions attended by 5 clients on average per week

## **AGI Movement Program**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, as caregivers were expressing concern about a lack of stimulation in the home environment for the person living with dementia, AGI developed the virtual Movement Program in order to keep minds and bodies engaged. This program is for both the person living with dementia and their caregiver.

Offered weekly, the program focuses on various types of movement exercises that participants do in the comfort of their own home. Group facilitators lead the program online, showing different adaptations of the exercises. These include



**AGI  
Movement  
Program  
(continued)**

adapted Tai Chi, chair yoga, balance training exercises, Zumba and dance aerobics.

This hour-long program provides participants with the opportunity to engage in exercise according to their own fitness level, which is vital as people living with dementia have differing abilities depending on the stage of the disease.

Participants have become familiar with each another, offering moments of social interaction. They are encouraged to engage with one another and this sense of team spirit allows the participants to feel that they are supported and included.

This program reached its gradual conclusion by the end of the current fiscal year as clients started participating in in-person sessions. It will be resumed in the next fiscal year's Fall season to offer activities for clients who are waiting to join the in-person activity centre.

→ 10 sessions attended by on average 7 clients per session.

**Young-Onset  
Support  
Group**

Starting in (Since) November 2022, AGI offers virtual YOD Support Groups led by an AGI Counselor. This group focuses on addressing their unique challenges faced by young individuals who have been diagnosed with the disease. These challenges are particularly distinctive due to the participants being in a different life stage compared to those with late onset dementia (LOD). Furthermore, their symptoms manifest in a manner distinct from those with LOD due to the combined influence of both their life stage and the nature of the disease.

→ 16 virtual sessions attended by on average 3 clients per session.

**AGI Sharing  
Sounds of  
Music Program**

The AGI Sharing Sounds of Music program is facilitated by AGI's Music Therapist and offered through Zoom twice weekly. Each 45-minute session provides music therapy to people living with dementia in the comfort of their own homes. Sessions are offered from 4:30 – 5:15 p.m. to reduce behaviours associated with sundowning, such as agitation. At the same time, providing caregivers with time to prepare dinner, look after items on their to-do list, have a moment for respite, or join in the program with their care partners.

People living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia can experience increased confusion, anxiety, agitation, pacing and disorientation towards the end of the day, referred to as sundowning. Music during this time can reduce anxiety during periods of sundowning or other late-day behaviours that may manifest in the person living with dementia. This program aims to help caregivers manage the effects of sundowning that their loved ones may be experiencing.

**AGI Sharing  
Sounds of Music  
Program  
(continued)**

People living with dementia participate without cost in the program. Sessions aim to enhance well-being, lessen isolation and loneliness, and improve the quality of life of participants.

Many caregivers have expressed that the Sharing Sounds of Music program holds significant value and meaning for both themselves and their loved ones. By participating in sessions, caregivers have identified the following benefits:

- An enhanced sense of relaxation
- More mindful of the here-and-now
- Improved emotional regulation
- Increased connections with sense of self and others
- Engaging in emotional expression, either verbal or non-verbal

The AGI Sharing Sounds of Music program is currently the only sundowning-focused music therapy program being offered in Montreal.

86 sessions attended by 7 clients on average per session (only the person living with dementia is counted).

**Individual  
Music Therapy  
Sessions**

AGI's Board-Certified Music Therapist provides one-on-one, 30 to 45-minute virtual and in-person sessions each week, with some assistance from graduate-level interns from the Concordia University Department of Creative Arts Therapies.

Each person possesses a distinct identity, causing their interactions with music to differ in intricate ways. Based on an individual assessment that includes reviewing a participant's personal history, cultural background, and musical preferences, AGI's Music Therapist creates a personalized treatment plan tailored to the psychosocial and emotional needs of each individual. This includes careful observation of non-verbal expressions in sessions, meeting participants in their current social and emotional state via musical experiences, and verbal validation techniques. Musical experiences include song sharing, music-

listening, multi-modal experiences, music and movement, singing, and lyrical analysis and/or translation.

Some participants currently receiving these services are partially or wholly non-verbal, and in some cases are living in a residence where activities such as music therapy are inaccessible. In these cases, music is used as a therapeutic medium. By building an intimate therapeutic relationship based on empathy, respect, and non-judgment, AGI's music therapy sessions provide a space for participants to feel seen, heard, and validated through musical experiences.

A caregiver is usually present in these sessions. In some cases, music therapy sessions allow caregivers to connect to their loved ones and engage in

## Programs for People Living With Dementia > continued

### Individual Music Therapy Sessions (continued)

reminiscence, such as recalling a story from their shared past. One such caregiver has stated the following:

“We keep music alive as it is the best medicine! And we are so grateful to have weekly music therapy sessions at AGI with a special music therapist. We call these music therapy days ‘Weekly Wonderful Wednesdays’. We learned how therapeutic and helpful music is for our well-being and facing all of the challenges associated with dementia.”

- There were 129 in-person individual music therapy sessions
- There were 286 virtual individual music therapy sessions
- An average 10 clients per week attending individual music therapy online & in-person

### Individual Art Therapy Sessions

AGI's Art Therapy Program helps our participants meet their social and emotional needs through creative expression. AGI's knowledgeable and professional Art Therapists lead the program with aid of graduate-level interns from the Concordia University Department of Creative Arts Therapies.

For people living with dementia, creating art in a supportive environment helps promote effective coping that go hand-in-hand with the life changes that come with dementia. The program focuses on emotional well-being and quality of life rather than artistic achievement. AGI provides art therapy in our in-person and virtual activity programs according to participant needs and their capacity to benefit from the program.

- 3 clients attended a total of 73 individual art therapy sessions.

### Art Therapy for Early-Onset Dementia

In response to expressed interest of the young-onset, AGI's Concordia Art Therapy intern designed a workshop series catering to individuals with early onset dementia. This virtual program occurred on a weekly basis, during which students integrated art appreciation lessons with teachings about the featured artist or theme of the day. Subsequently, they used a blend of digital and physical artistic techniques to engage the client

- 3 clients attended a total of 15 group art therapy sessions.

### 3. Education and Training

The AGI Lassner Learning Centre provides a comprehensive curriculum for both family and professional caregivers that promotes a greater understanding of dementia-related topics while teaching practical skills and offering valuable solutions. All education and training programs have been modified to hybrid.

#### Dementia 101

Dementia 101 is an intensive course covering a broad range of topics, from the signs and symptoms of dementia to helpful strategies for communicating, interacting and managing challenging behaviors of loved ones affected with Alzheimer's or other dementia. The first course of the year took place online while the second was in-person.

→ 18 instructional hours delivered to 15 participants.

#### Dementia Training for Healthcare Professionals

- Bayshore Home & Community Healthcare: Meaningful Activities for People Living with Dementia. A two-part course over 8 hours, training homecare workers who plan to deliver activities to their clients within the home.
- SAPA Nursing Week Training: Stress Management and Self-Care for Professional Care Partners. May 10th 2023, virtual one-hour training.  
→ 50 participants
- McGill School of Social Work  
Graduate seminar at the McGill School of Social Work October 27, 2022  
→ 3 Participants
- Undergraduate presentation at the McGill School of Social Work, November 21, 2022  
→ 16 Participants

#### AGI Webinar Series

AGI offers engaging lectures through the AGI Webinar Series, featuring guest speakers who are experts in their field. Webinar topics focus on current issues and concerns related to dementia and caregiving. These presentations are open to the public without cost and are offered 1-2 times per month, currently online.

Each webinar delivers practical information to caregivers in an effort to improve their daily lives while enhancing their understanding about dementia. Through this Lecture Series, AGI aims to increase awareness, knowledge and support from the public regarding Alzheimer's and other dementias. Outreach helps to build a dementia-

## Education and Training > continued

### AGI Webinar Series (continued)

friendly community where people with dementia are understood, respected and supported.

In addition to the guest speaker(s), each session has an AGI moderator who provides technical support to attendees and manages questions through the chat function. Each webinar is recorded and shared on AGI's YouTube channel so caregivers can reference or share the materials. Since June 30, 2023, the presented webinars have received 685 views.

→ 8 informative hours provided to 229 participants through the following lectures:

1. [\*The D-Word: Demystifying Dementia\*](#) with guest speaker Dr. Wendy Chiu, MD, Professor of Geriatric Medicine at McGill University
2. *Dementia in the LGBTQ+ Community* with guest speaker Julien Rougerie, Program Manager at Fondation Emergence
3. [\*Enhancing Social Connections After a Diagnosis of Dementia\*](#) with guest speaker Dr. Darla Fortune, PhD, Associate Professor of Applied Human Sciences at Concordia University
4. [\*Brain Scans and Tests\*](#) with guest speaker Dr. Paolo Vitali, MD, PhD, FRCPC, Neurologist at the McGill Centre for Studies on Aging.
5. [\*Male Caregivers: How the Role Differs for Males and What Support They Need\*](#) with guest speaker Vincent Poisson, Doctor of Public Health candidate (UNSW) and State Manager at Dementia Australia
6. [\*End-of-Life and Palliative Care\*](#) with guest speaker Marie-Lee Yous, RN, PhD, postdoctoral research at McMaster University
7. [\*Living Loss: Anticipatory Grief\*](#) with guest speaker Dr. Anita Mehta, RN, PhD, CFT, Director of Education and Knowledge Exchange for the Montreal institute for Palliative Care
8. [\*Homologation 101: When, Why and How to Formulate a Protection Mandate\*](#) with guest speaker Mandy Novak-Leonard (MSW), Professional Social Worker and president of Les Évaluations Mandy Novak-Léonard, Inc.

## 4. Community Outreach

Through outreach, AGI aims to increase awareness, knowledge and support from the public regarding Alzheimer's and related dementias, while providing practical, hands-on information to the community at large. Outreach helps to build a dementia-friendly community where people with dementia are understood, respected and supported.

### **Outreach Presentations and Kiosks**

AGI achieved the goal of outreach through presentations at other organizations in the community as well as attendance at fairs or kiosks:

- Montreal West Seniors Table, September 9, 2022, 18 participants
- Pointe Claire Plaza Community Awareness Day, September 10, 2022, 48 participants.
- West Island Table for the Needs of Seniors (Virtual), September 15, 2022, 12 participants.
- Vanier College Career Fair, April 24, 2023, 42 participants.
- CRIUGIM invited to speak on Journeying Through Dementia, consulting as a community organization, May 24, 2023, 32 participants.
- NDG Senior's Table, May 26, 2023, 21 participants.
- Elder Abuse Awareness Day, June 15, 2023, 27 participants.
- Guest speaker for McGill School of Occupational and Physical Therapy graduate seminar course on Healthy Aging, attended by two clients along with caregivers, 4 to 6 participants,
- Open Minds, Open Hearts, Ecole nationale de cirque
- Au Contraire Film Festival, digital edition, 1,242 participants

## 2022-2023 Snapshot

**AGI reached 2506** Montrealers and beyond through AGI's Programs for People Living with Dementia, Support for Caregivers, Education and Training.



**AGI connected with 2390** people across the Island of Montreal and via the world wide web through free community presentations and events.