

Poetry Project

TACKLING ALZHEIMER'S WITH LONG-AGO LESSONS



New England Dream Center was host yesterday to the Alzheimer's Poetry Project, with poet Gary Glazner, right, singing with Kevin, an adult day care participant (T&G Staff Photos / CHRISTINE PETERSON)

By Jacqueline Reis TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

jreis@telegram.com

1 comment | [Add a comment](#)

WORCESTER — Yesterday's beat-like poetry jam at the New England Dream Center's Adult Day Health Program included readings of Shakespeare, Edgar Allen Poe and Gelett Burgess. It was all part of the Alzheimer's Poetry Project, which seeks to reach people suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's by sparking their memory of poems they learned early in life through music and poetry readings.

Gary Glazner, the poetry project's founder, is an impressive performer and a welcoming one. He took all contributions offered for a group-written poem about flowers, including the statement of one woman who told him that flowers smell "like your breath, honey." Mr. Glazner produced the first National Poetry Slam in San Francisco in 1990 but started this particular project after getting a grant in 1997 to bring poetry to adults with Alzheimer's.



Introducing the Alzheimer's Poetry Project are, from left, poet Gary Glazner; activities coordinator Eli Mateo; poets Lori Desrosiers and Kol Goodstein; and social worker Michael Leo.

He happened upon the Dream Center by chance, passing through the area on other business. Once inside, he was impressed with the center's offerings. "This is the most creative place I've found," he said.

The activities featured yesterday fit in well at the Dream Center, whose Adult Day Health program offers its clients drumming circles and creative writing each week. Only a handful of their approximately 80 clients, with ages ranging from 29 to 92, have dementia or Alzheimer's, says Michael Leo, a social worker with the program. Others are there because of mental health problems or other, non-serious, issues.

Several Dream Center clients said they'd welcome the poets back. "I do like Shakespeare," said Nella. "I liked the poems we rehearsed today."

"It was very entertaining, and it brought new ideas to mind," said Marie S. of Worcester.

"It was nice." said Richard C. "Especially the one with the hat. I liked him."

Skip Shea, an actor, filmmaker, artist and poet from Uxbridge, joined Mr. Glazner yesterday, as did Lori Desrosiers of Westfield and Kol Goodstein of Northampton. Mr. Leo and the health program Activities Coordinator Eli Mateo helped out on the drums.