

SEPTEMBER 2023

# NEIGHBOURS

*of Mississauga Road*

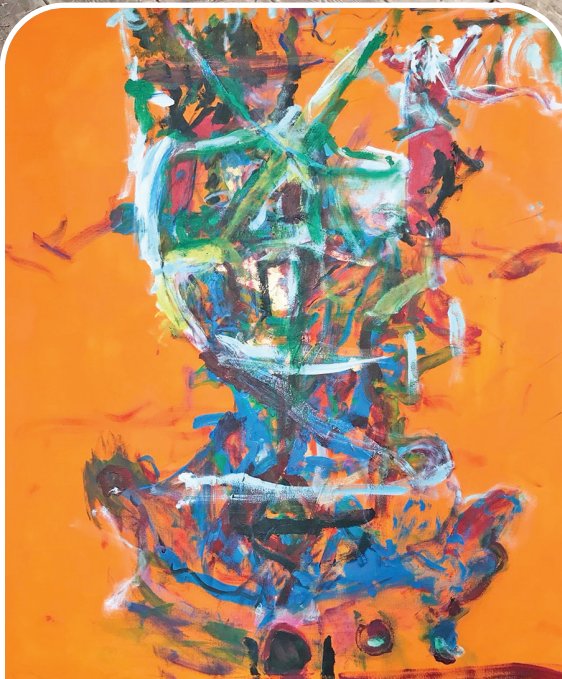
An exclusive magazine serving the communities of Mississauga Road, Sherwood Forrest, Erindale At UTM, Sawmill Valley and Indian Road



## *Reimagining Dementia:*

A Creative Coalition  
for Justice

Inset photo courtesy of Anthony Grani,  
director, Dancer Not Dementia



Art by  
Kevin  
Whitaker



# *Reimagining Dementia:*

## A Creative Coalition for Justice

Art by Andrea Begg



Keith Francis, researcher and member of Reimagining Dementia



By Annette Torchia

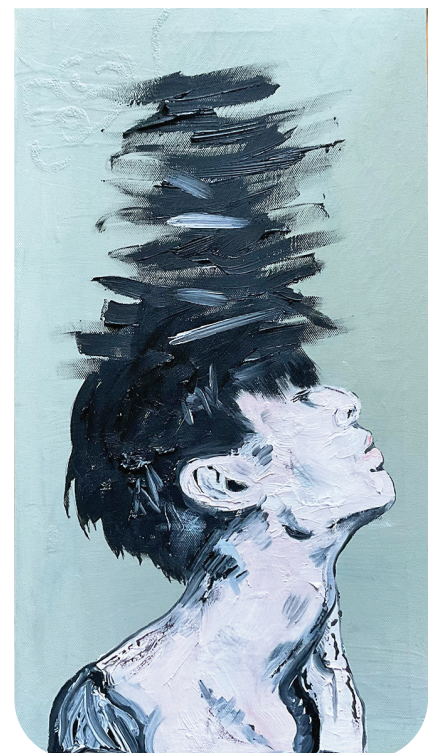
As an 18-year resident of Sawmill Valley, Keith Francis values the beauty of this hamlet and proudly calls it home. “It’s the cottage without the drive,” he praises his community, where for many years he would walk with his late-dog, Sumo, who passed away two years ago. “Everyone knew Sumo and his howl, which would always accompany the fire truck sirens. He was more human than humans,” Keith recalls fondly. He even wrote a beautiful poem to honour Sumo, which you can find in this issue’s Pet Corner.

In addition to his beloved companion, Keith is also passionate about his work as a researcher and member of Reimagining Dementia: A Creative Coalition for Justice. This international group consists of people living with dementia, caregivers, family and community members, advocates and allies, health professionals, artists, academics, policy makers, and others. Together, they share a vision of care that promotes inclusion, relationships, creativity, joy and the possibility of growth for everyone living with dementia. Founded in 2020, the Coalition has grown to over 815 members in 33 countries, and has launched “Taking it to the Streets,” an international grassroots campaign. “The focus of the campaign is to

shift the narrative about dementia from loss and decline to hope and possibilities,” Keith tells us. The campaign will run the week of September 18-24, 2023, during World Alzheimer’s Month, and hopes to raise awareness and encourage conversation about this important topic and the work and research being conducted in this field.

“The Coalition is asking its members and partner organizations to host public-facing events, activities and conversations that present a creative alternative to the fear, stigma and hopelessness surrounding dementia,” Keith explains. One such event, organized by Toronto and Waterloo members, is an art exhibit and film screening at the Fairview Library Theatre on September 21st, to coincide with World Alzheimer’s Day. The exhibit will feature artwork by people living with dementia and a silent auction. A few photos of the artwork to be exhibited are featured with this article, and are by a talented artist with dementia, Andrea Begg. The exhibit will also feature other art by people living with dementia including Kevin Whitaker, members of the Bitove Method, Sharing Our Voice, and so much more.

If you attend the event on September 21st, you will also see a screening of two short documentary films and a music



video. “*Dancer Not Dementia* is a documentary film directed by Anthony Grani and co-produced by Canada’s National Ballet School and KITE Research Institute, University Health Network,” Keith tells us. “The film captures the power of dance to support creativity, joy, playfulness, community and connection; this is expressed through the eyes of residents and staff of Alexis Lodge Dementia Care Residence and Cedarhurst Dementia Care Home, as well as through experts in the health and arts spaces.” The other film being screened is titled *Chasing Monsters: Parkinson’s and the Power of Art*, which is produced and directed by Jeana McCabe. The film features High Park resident Kevin Whitaker, an Ontario Superior Court judge, who retired and turned to painting after being diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia. Mr. Whitaker’s artwork will be featured in the Fairview Library Theatre art exhibit.

The creativity abounds at the event, with the performance of *Let’s Reimagine*, a co-created song and video project, also part of the show. This musical project challenges stigma and hopes to show how people living with dementia can engage, connect and live a vibrant creative life in the community. “It advocates for more humane and relational care policies and practices for all people impacted by dementia,” Keith explains. “The making of the song was a creative, collaborative, and iterative process facilitated and produced by two-time Grammy award-winning musician Simon Law, in collaboration with musicians and songwriters, people living with dementia, family care partners, and other members of the Coalition.”

If you’re looking to support a wonderful and important cause or to fill your calendar with a creative experience, you may wish

to consider attending the Coalition’s planned events in the GTA. Admission is free, but donations are accepted if anyone wishes to support the Coalition and its efforts.

In addition to “Taking it to the Streets,” Keith is also working on several projects involving persons living with dementia. For instance, he is working on installing gardens in long-term care homes during the months of February and March when seasonal affective disorder (SAD) takes a significant toll on many dementia patients. This idea was borne out of research which shows that flowers and plants play an important role for those living with this condition, and often serve as substitutes for loved ones they believe to have lost. BrainXchange Design and Dementia Community of Practice are also contributing some innovative ideas. Rebekah Churchyard is doing great work with sensory Green Care Farms to empower individuals with dementia to engage in meaningful activities in nature and to strive to create an environment that embodies normalcy and purpose. The Green Care Farm is located on Andrews Farm in Milton and is modelled on programs from the Netherlands and British Columbia.

“I have such warm feelings whenever *Neighbours of Mississauga Road* magazine reaches our door,” Keith tells us. “Your support in bringing awareness to our Coalition and the work we do is greatly appreciated.” 🌱

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**DO YOU KNOW A NEIGHBOUR WHO HAS A STORY TO SHARE?**

Nominate your neighbour to be featured in one of our upcoming issues!

Contact us at [atorchia@bestversionmedia.com](mailto:atorchia@bestversionmedia.com)

# In Memory of Sumo: Poem for Sumo and Sawmill

Submitted by Keith Francis



## I WALK WITH HIM

The breath of dawn cast a shadow play,  
dew shivers and glistens a soft ballet

Sun rays' warm breasts of Whippoorwills,  
hark life upon the trails of Sawmill

Iridescence paint oak leaves' scrim,  
looming lights, the masters' strings

Vapours chase the disappearing mist,  
two legs ghost four, yet I walk with him

Leash unleashed the spirit's song,  
the rub tug pulls of eagerness gone

Sirens wail upon westerly winds,  
returns no more the howl of strange kin

Dulcet tones my heart sings blue,  
break the daylight salves anew

Respite the ache that longing brings,  
hope harp pulls the minor strings

Fast life spends the currency of youth,  
as all succumb to the inevitable truth

Rituals of life may leaven once more,  
as spring warms hopes of forevermore.

