

4 INNOVATIONS IMPROVING DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

BY Jennifer Dorozio

From adaptive clothing to interactive home care, these new technologies make a difference for people living with dementia



Marlena Books

After watching her grandmother, who is living with dementia, successfully read a wordy newspaper headline out loud, Rachel Thompson, a then-University of Waterloo student, had an “aha” moment.

“[My grandmother] was always an avid reader but as her dementia progressed, we noticed her struggling with

traditional books,” says Thompson. But she realized, “It wasn’t that Grandma couldn’t read, just that her needs had changed with reading.”

Thompson began to hunt for books catered to people living with dementia, with large clear words, laid out simply. When she couldn’t find anything on the market, she decided to publish her own.

In the fall of 2016, Ontario-based Marlena Books (Marlena being a combination of Thompson’s grandmothers’ names) was launched. Offering dementia friendly writing, layout and content — at a grade five level of reading — Marlena Books work to engage the minds of those with dementia with age-appropriate themes and easy-to-read content. The books also feature wider margins and prompt for when to turn the page.

“Reading is something that is so based in our childhood, something that is so comforting and familiar to everyone and we wanted to preserve that,” says Thompson.

DID YOU KNOW? Marlena Books has developed an app version of the books, which won first prize in the inaugural AGE-WELL National Impact Challenge, a contest for new technology-based solutions for healthy aging. The app, currently available for download on iTunes, offers customizable font size, automatic page turning and more. Learn more at agewell-nce.ca and marlenabooks.com



2

Vyitality At Home

Vyitality At Home, a home care company that launched in Calgary in September 2018, connects home care workers with people living with dementia and has created an app that offers insight into those visits. Through its app, which can be used on a smartphone, tablet or laptop, loved ones are alerted to valuable information like when a Vyitality At Home care worker arrives, leaves and what they did that day. They can also video conference or call family members during the visit.

“This gives the family that ability to know and be hands-on without having to physically be there with their loved one while they’re receiving the care,” says Nicole Dyer, co-founder of Vyitality At Home.

For more information, visit vyitality.ca.



DEMENTIA

connections



Spring 2019

YOUR
GUIDE TO
LIVING
WELL IN
CALGARY

**SAFE
TRAVELS**

PRACTICAL TIPS
AND TRICKS
FOR A SAFE AND
MEMORABLE
HOLIDAY AWAY

**DEMENTIA-
INCLUSIVE
INITIATIVES,
ADVICE FOR
CARE PARTNERS,
INVALUABLE
RESOURCES
AND MORE**

*Finding*JOY

Cathie Thrall has a full and colourful life