In 1998, Chautauqua Adult Day Services and the Chautauqua County Office for the Aging met to discuss opening a day program to serve individuals with Alzheimer’s Disease and Memory Loss. Chautauqua County is a rural county and it did not have a dementia specific day program. In October 1998, the agency opened the Present Center, the first day program in Chautauqua County to specifically serve adults with Alzheimer’s Disease and Memory Loss. The agency applied for funding from the Brookdale Foundation to be a Brookdale National Group Respite Program and was awarded the grant. The funding helped leverage other startup funds to open the site in Jamestown, New York and a collaborative effort of 16 organizations and funders made it possible. The site serves up to 12 individuals a day and is open five days a week and the agency is exploring funding possibilities for the renovation of another room to expand the program.

In 2018, the site celebrated its 20th year of operation and it has touched the lives of many older adults and caregivers in the community. The site provides transportation, nutrition and case management services. The agency has received funding to obtain a bus that provides door to door transportation with escorts that also work with clients during the day in the activity program. In addition to trained paid staff, the organization is very active recruiting volunteer help. The agency works closely with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and has student placements from Jamestown Community College Occupational Therapy Program and Social Work student interns from SUNY Fredonia. There is also intergenerational programming with grade school and high school students visiting the site. Local volunteers include musicians, companions and entertainers and the program is a job placement site for the Department of Social Services, the Summer Youth Work Program and the Senior Companion and Senior Aid programs.

The Present Center has collaborated with other organizations that provide Caregiver Support Groups and Educational Programs. The Center provides respite, free of charge to caregivers, so they can attend programs such as “Powerful Tools for Caregivers” and Alzheimer Association Support Groups that help them care for their loved one.

Over the years, the agency has obtained grants to provide Music and Art Therapy activities. There is also pet therapy, exercise, crafts and the program has a kiln to fire ceramics for its Ceramic Program. The Community Involvement program provides trained staff to take individuals on outings in the community they normally could not do because of their mental and physical condition. There is also a Happy Grams singing group that capable individuals participate in that provides entertainment at nursing homes and other local organizations. The agency actively promotes its program and all its activities on its website and Facebook and utilizes other forms of Social Media on an ongoing basis.

A recent initiative is the Latino Outreach to Seniors program that provides interpretation and translation services for Latino caregivers and organizations that serve older adults. The goal of the program is to help older Latinos receive services and increase the Latino population at the day program. As a result of this service, the agency has successfully increased its number of Latinos served.

The Present Center is located in the First Baptist Church of Jamestown and the church has helped take on our mission by renting us space as a low cost to help keep our program affordable for families. Overall, the agency has secured funding from many agencies such as the Chautauqua County Office for Aging, United Way, and Veterans Administration and has secured contracts with Managed Long Term Care programs. This has enabled the agency to maintain program sustainability to be there for the families in the community caring for a loved one with Alzheimer’s Disease and Memory Loss. Twenty-One years of service with more to follow. “Where Every Day Is A Good Day!”