



**JOYCE SIMARD**  
Namaste Care Founder  
Geriatric Consultant, Author  
Land O'Lakes, Fla.



**'It's so incredible. It's definitely not about me; it's about the people in our industry. They are caring people. Namaste gives structure to what people want to do all the time.'**

Joyce Simard doesn't talk much about herself. In fact, she spent most of her interview with *Provider* talking about the Namaste Care program she developed about 10 years ago for people with advanced dementia.

Not surprisingly, Simard is modest about what appears to be her steadfast pursuit of advocating for elders with dementia. She describes her work as "simply putting structure to something that caregivers already know is the right thing to do."

Namaste, which is Hindu for "honoring the spirit within," is about creating a peaceful space for residents with advanced dementia to go to at any time.

A Namaste Care program takes place in a designated space, within a nursing home or assisted living community, where the environment is safe and comforting for all who enter, including residents, their families, and staff.

Ideally a seven-days-per-week program, Namaste can include hand and foot massages, brushing or combing a person's hair with slow movements, and facials. In nursing homes and assisted living facilities, the program can be presented to residents either in its own dedicated space, or in a converted space (such as a dining room, for example), where scent of lavender is present, lights are low, and music is soft—much like a spa.

"I truly believe that people with dementia can have quality in their lives until their last breath," says Simard. "But quality of life is more than keeping somebody dressed and fed and changed"—which is why Simard created Namaste.

Simard now spends time traveling, speaking, and training folks about Namaste throughout the United States and in the United Kingdom, Greece, and Australia.

Among the benefits of the program are reduced agitation, decreased and sometimes complete elimination of the use of antipsychotic medications, and reduced falls.

### SPREADING THE WORD

The program has become popular not just in nursing homes but in assisted living and hospice. In addition to her travels, Simard is working on a second edition of her book, "The End-of-Life Namaste Care Program for People with Dementia," which was first published four years ago.

"Joyce is totally focused on Namaste, which is a great quality about her," says Pauline Coram, director of executive learning in the assisted living division of HCR ManorCare. Coram has worked with Simard since last February on the rollout of Namaste in the company's dementia care communities, Arden Courts.

"What sets her apart—and in thinking about it, it has become a refrain in my head—is that she is single-minded in her pursuit," says Coram. "It comes out of her pores. And she is really almost flawless in her approach to training and educating folks about the program. She beats the drum consistently and constantly.

"She's like an Energizer bunny; she gets energized by talking about it and being around people. And she doesn't do it

for herself—she does it because people need it, and it's worth it," Coram says.

Coram's company has been so impressed by Simard's work that all 54 Arden Court communities are in the process of implementing Namaste Care programs.

Indeed, it is obvious that Simard is energized by talking about the program. "It's so incredible," she says. "It's definitely not about me; it's about the people in our industry. They are

caring people. Namaste gives structure to what people want to do all the time."

At the end of her interview, Simard asked, "The article is going to be about the wonderful people we work with, and it's definitely going to be more about people knowing what to do with people with advanced dementia than about me, right? Because that's what it's all about."

Yes, that's what it's all about.