

For Immediate Release:

**SANDPOINT FRIENDSHIP STATION LAUNCHES SOON TO SERVE THOSE
LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CAREGIVERS**



A new ministry designed to provide compassionate support and meaningful companionship to individuals and families facing the daily challenge of memory loss, dementia and caregiving is opening soon at Sandpoint United Methodist Church.

Soon to launch, **Sandpoint Friendship Station** is rooted in kindness and community spirit. Its mission is to offer a nurturing, enriching space where guests can enjoy creative, recreational and enriching activities; as well, joy-filled fellowship and gentle care –while giving their caregivers a much-needed time of rest and renewal.

This vision to bring forth a local respite ministry in Sandpoint is championed by residents Deni Williamson and Lissa “Elissabeth” Defreitas. Inspired by the belief that ‘no one should walk the journey of Dementia and Caregiving alone’, Williamson and Defreitas join with the expanding “**Respite for All**” movement, serving with heart and hope, compassion and purpose.

Both completing a recent volunteer training in Boise, Idaho with the Respite for All Foundation, Williamson and Defreitas caught the tremendous wave of inspiration as they gathered new tools for growing this mission in Sandpoint. “We didn’t have to re-invent the wheel”, shared Defreitas. “We are able to apply the best practices that hold proven success with now 59 community ministries across America”. The Respite for All model is a research-based, time-tested solution that local churches and organizations can implement to create thriving communities for our friends living with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia”.

“It’s on purpose that communities like Sandpoint offer respite ministries”, noted Defreitas. “The number of people living with Alzheimer’s and other

Dementias continues to grow; as well, the number of unpaid caregivers and families facing the daily challenge of care for their loved one with Dementia are on the rise.

For Williamson and Defreitas, this ministry is both personal and passionate – having first-hand experience with being a presence of love and support for a loved one with Alzheimer's. "This is about cultivating relationship", shared Defreitas. "While someone with memory loss and dementia might lose touch with roles, lifelong events and where they've walked in their lives -- the essential 'Self' celebrates connection, purpose & joy", she added. "We are embracing our neighbors that are living often silently or in isolation as they offer presence 24/7 with their loved one.", added Defreitas. "It is our intention to walk with those in need on this often-difficult journey, offering a gift of respite and support".

The Respite for All model of care had its origin in the basement of a United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama in 2012. Its Founder, Daphne Johnson shares, "the running theme is -those living with Alzheimer's and Dementia can '*reclaim their joy*' with the help from their neighbors". The Respite for All Ministry is a volunteer-supported, joy-focused model that holds its power in offering a gift of presence. Daphne has described this movement of care, a "ministry of Spirit".

As Williamson and Defreitas explored a home for this local ministry, it was the Sandpoint United Methodist Church that *answered the call of service* and welcomed us with extraordinary enthusiasm and joy. Miles Small, SUMC Trustee shared that "this church holds a deep and abiding mission to serve our community". He noted that 'more and more we are recognizing the growing need to serve families impacted by Dementia'.

We celebrate our team ship together as a community, as churches, as organizations and as neighbors to truly hold a container for 'connecting with JOY' and building a thriving respite community.

The **Sandpoint Friendship Station** offers its first free Volunteer Training on August 20, 2025, from 10:00 am. 2:00 p.m. Because we are an 'all volunteer supported ministry', we look forward to activating the call to service in this community-at-large.

Williamson shared, "The Friendship Station is a nod to Sandpoint's long-standing history with trains. A railway station can be a rest stop, a destination,

or a place for departure. We see the Friendship Station as a local welcoming place on life's journey", she added.

Let's build a Friendship Station together –where every life is honored, every caregiver supported, and every heart welcomed.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SANDPOINT FRIENDSHIP STATION, ENROLL A LOVED ONE, OR BECOME A VOLUNTEER, CONTACT US AT:

sandpointfriendshipstation@gmail.com or call

208-304-6624

To explore the Respite for All Foundation, go to:

Respiteforall.org



Lissa "Elissabeth" Defreitas, Daphne Johnson & Deni Williamson

At the Cathedral of the Rockies Respite for All Volunteer Training, June 2025