



# tangles in time

real people - real stories

## Cast Bios and Quotes

Meet the cast of *Tangles in Time*, twelve participant-performers sharing real-life stories of living with dementia, caregiving and healing.

### John Best

John Best is a neurology resident at the University of Pennsylvania and a future cognitive neurologist and dementia care provider. His fascination with the brain is contagious. When not in the hospital, John can be found riding his bike across Pennsylvania, dancing for hours on end, or cooking up a storm for friends and strangers.

*When the brain is healthy, all the parts talk to each other at the right time—the outside and inside worlds synchronize. But with dementia, we never know what will rise up. It's most beautiful when all the parts work together. It's most tragic when they don't.*

### Brienne Bush

Brienne Bush attended Spelman College and is now pursuing her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Thomas Jefferson University. She participates in the annual Autism Speaks Walk in Philadelphia each year as a team leader in support of her elder son, Kaleb. Brienne loves to spend her time creating special memories for her two children and her younger brother and sister. She also enjoys reading, fitness and music.

*I'm an unconditional lover. You need that type of open heart to work with others. Everything isn't about a diagnosis. You never want to make anyone feel like a diagnosis.*

### Salena Cui

Salena Cui is a medical student at Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University. At the transition between classroom and hospital, she is grateful for all the people and books who have been her teachers so far. She loves to dance and play music and treasures holidays with family. She can often be found playing piano for patients in the hospital.

*How do we lose a language and culture so quickly? How do we find the language beyond words?*

### Bill Dougherty

Bill Dougherty worked as a pharmacist for fifty-three years, including the last thirty as manager of Outpatient Pharmacies at Jefferson Health. Married to Nora for fifty-five years, Bill is the father of four great sons, three grandsons and (finally!) one granddaughter. He always enjoyed playing, refereeing and coaching sports. Bill is currently diagnosed with dementia.

*Sometimes my mind feels blank. With this diagnosis, Nora is the one taking all the punches. What am I going to do to help her?*

### Nora Dougherty

Nora Dougherty has been married to her husband, Bill, since 1964. She has been a hematology medical technologist and, later, a phlebotomist at Jefferson Health. She loves gardening, opera and music of almost any kind. For her, cooking and baking have always been tops. She is currently a care partner for her husband Bill.

*Bill and I have a deep abiding love after 54 years of marriage. I will always be there for him. There's a touch of divine in the deep place in my center.*

### Kailyn Kim

Kailyn Kim is a medical student pursuing internal medicine at Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University. She has learned so much from everyone and is excited to be a part of this wonderful piece. She enjoys dogs, 60-degree weather and planning her next meal before finishing her current meal.

*I grew up afraid to ask questions about subjects that my family didn't speak about. The question I was most afraid to ask was "What's going on with grandma?"*

### Sunny Lai

Sunny Lai is a family medicine physician at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital with special interests in HIV, addiction and LGBTQ health. She is a lover of all things creative. She is thrilled to share this experience with her partner, John Best, and all of the amazing individuals in this work.

*For me, being a physician is about being with a family through the mundane as well as life-changing moments. It's about long companionship and knowing their stories. And if there are no more words, it's about being with their soul.*

### Kimberly Mellon

Kimberly Mellon is a certified clinical hemodialysis technician at Jefferson Health, New Jersey, and a recent graduate of Thomas Jefferson University's College of Nursing. She is a dedicated mother to her dear daughter, Nevaeh Mellon. She loves dogs, coffee and the beauty of human connection.

*After many years of taking care of my grandmother at home, we had to put her in a care facility. It's hard to think you've failed your loved one.*

#### Mary Anne Szkaradnik

Mary Anne Szkaradnik is a retired ICU-Critical Care nurse residing in South Jersey with her husband, Mike, and two children. She loved to garden and exercise and now likes to dance and listen to music. Mary Anne is living with dementia.

*I would be nowhere. That's where I am right now. [I think you're somewhere, you're right here.] Right here? Good.*

#### Mike Szkaradnik

Mike Szkaradnik is a married father of two who grew up in Northeast Philadelphia and now resides in South Jersey. He worked in accounting and finance and now owns his own business. Mike loves to play golf. He is the care partner of his wife, Mary Anne, who has frontal lobe dementia.

*Being a care partner can be scary. It's like I'm on an island. Other times, it's like I'm spinning plates and, before I know it, one has crashed.*

#### Michael J. Williams

Michael J. Williams was born and raised in Philadelphia. Like his mother, Michael loves traveling and jumping in his car to take long drives while watching the sun rise. He retired from AT&T in 1987 and began working full time in healthcare. He has been a volunteer E.M.T. and instructor. Michael was a care partner for his mother, who had dementia.

*When my mother had dementia, the most upsetting part was when she told me she didn't have any children. I said "OK," because I'd known that day was coming.*

#### Norm Wisler

Upon his late wife Marcia's Alzheimer's diagnosis, Norm Wisler started reading and learning about dementia and the brain. He became active in programs, courses and conferences of the Alzheimer's Association, American Brain Foundation, University of Pennsylvania and ARTZ Philadelphia. Norm currently operates a long-term care insurance firm and jogs 5.5 to 7 miles per day.

*Before my wife Marcia died of Alzheimer's, I knew I'd do anything I could to help her and keep her. When we got married, we changed our vows to say "love, honor, and protect." Part of my love was to always protect her.*