Baby Zoomers are the way forward for dementia charity My Life Films

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Embracing change was the only way one small charity could continue with their award-winning service during this difficult time. My Life Films based in Richmond, south west London produce life story films for people living with dementia, capturing their memories with photographs, interviews & music. Currently unable to film with the families the team realised the only way to make the films was without anyone leaving their homes.

Video chats are now the new norm as an alternative to meeting up and they are also cross generational even the so called ‘baby zoomers’ have got to grips with the technology. The charity adopted this technology to film the family interviews this way.

“My job is to facilitate an environment where the families can tell their story, so when it comes to getting the materials together and working the technology” says Kenyon Shankie, a filmmaker with My Life Films, he added “ I’m there to support the family from beginning to end.”

Angela Bell and her family had contacted My Life Films about making a film for her mother-in-law also called Angela. She is currently self -isolating at home with a carer after a recent spell in hospital so the family have been unable to see her and they thought a Life Story Film would really lift Angela’s spirits and bring back positive and happy memories.

Angela Bell had reservations about how the process would work but she said:

“As we were unable to meet Kenyon and talk through the content for the film, we had to organise & collate all the photographs and write an outline of Angela’s biography. Then to get all the material to Kenyon we used all sorts of methods including What’s App, Zoom, We Transfer some of which I’d never used before, but he helped us every step of the way. The support was fantastic.”

When the film is finished there’s usually a screening of the film with friends and family attending with the person living with dementia being the star of the film. The charity still made the premiere something special even under lockdown and delivered the film digitally which Angela was able to view on her tablet with the help of her carer. Angela Bell said about her mother-in-law’s experience of watching the film for the first time: "She marvelled at seeing her life in a film and one which conveys so much meaning and joy” and she went on to say “the film was beyond our expectations and Angela watches it every day, it’s something for us all to treasure.”

My Life Film has decided that the way forward is to work in this way producing films remotely until there’s a relaxation in the regulations. They would love to hear from anyone living with dementia or a member of their family who would benefit from a film and feels they could work in this way. Please contact charlotte@mylifefilms.org

Extra Information

My Life Films is a charity registered in England and Wales. It was founded in 2014 by a London-based TV Producer and his journalist wife working with dementia and healthcare specialists to devise the core My Life Films service. My Life Films uses filmmaking to improve the lives of people affected by dementia. Our vision is a world where people with dementia aren’t defined by their illness.

Over the last six years, we have created personalised films that capture the life stories of people with dementia, giving them a lasting form of reminiscence therapy and a way for care workers to get to know them quickly. Our filmmaking process brings together family and friends to share stories and the films give them a lasting memory of the person for generations to come.

In 2016 the charity won Charity start -up of the year & Dementia Care Product of the Year.

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