

# Alzheimer Society

BRITISH COLUMBIA

## NEWS RELEASE

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### September Is World Alzheimer's Month and B.C. Caregivers Speak Out

**Vancouver, B.C.**—September is World Alzheimer's Month and the Alzheimer Society of B.C. will introduce British Columbians to four caregivers. More than 70,000 British Columbians are living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, but the disease also impacts thousands of caregivers and family members who contribute tens of millions of hours of informal care annually.

"In 2008, B.C. caregivers provided an estimated 33.1 million hours of informal care — a number that could triple by 2038 if we do not build a long-term dementia strategy," says Alzheimer Society of B.C. Interim CEO Larry Okotinsky.



*A sneak peek at the World Alzheimer's Month Journey of Caring campaign.*

Over 36 million people worldwide live with dementia and the Society will drive support for those impacted by the disease in B.C. throughout September with its Journey of Caring social media campaign. Support those impacted by Alzheimer's disease by visiting [www.facebook.com/AlzheimerBC](http://www.facebook.com/AlzheimerBC) and donating your Facebook profile picture this month. Follow the Society on social media to share caregiver stories and help policy makers understand why a long-term dementia strategy is needed in B.C.

The Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s important work helps people with dementia, their families and caregivers through education, programs like First Link<sup>®</sup> and Minds in Motion<sup>®</sup>, advocacy, the Alzheimer Society Research Program and support groups. Meet some of the caregivers who give generously of their time to help the Society confront the dementia crisis.

#### **Volunteer Support Group Facilitator Carolyn Herbert**

"You do not have to solve everybody's problems," says Volunteer Support Group Facilitator Carolyn Herbert. "I try and emphasize to everyone that 'this is your group and you are supporting each other.'"

Victoria resident Carolyn Herbert has been a longtime volunteer facilitator for the Society's support groups, after caring for three of her own family members living with

dementia. Support groups give caregivers a place to share effective coping strategies with people experiencing similar challenges.

### **Coffee Break<sup>®</sup> Host Joan Mayzes**

Coffee Break Host Joan Mayzes was the primary caregiver for her late husband Ken on his journey with dementia. The 82 year-old hosts a Coffee Break every September in her Nanaimo home. "I make a little party out of it," she says.

Coffee Break is a nationwide series of community gatherings that raise awareness and much-needed funds for local programs and services. These coffee breaks are hosted in homes, with friends and neighbours, at work or in the community. Hosts receive donations while serving coffee.

### **Alzheimer's Advocate Patrick Tham**

"Minds in Motion, I think, has been amazing for the family. I've seen the change in Mom and Dad, in their ability to come out of their shells in a safe environment," says Vancouver-based Alzheimer's Advocate Patrick Tham.

Minds in Motion<sup>®</sup> is a fitness and social program that assists people experiencing early stage memory loss due to Alzheimer's disease or another dementia. The Society is also proud to offer First Link<sup>®</sup> — an early intervention service that connects individuals and families affected by dementia with services and support as soon as possible after diagnosis.

### **Anything for Alzheimer's Fundraiser Deirdre Penk O'Donnell**

Anything for Alzheimer's Fundraiser Deirdre Penk O'Donnell of West Vancouver attended a Society support group while caring for both of her parents during their dementia journeys. When she shared her story, she saw "a crazy amount of compassion on everyone's faces." Penk O'Donnell says she instantly "stopped feeling alone and inadequate."

Grateful for the help she received, Penk O'Donnell found a way to give back through *Anything for Alzheimer's*, with an event at the Penk O'Donnell School of Irish Dance.

Penk O'Donnell is in good company, as *Who's Line is it Anyway?* **Comedian Colin Mochrie** is asking British Columbians to do *Anything for Alzheimer's* this World Alzheimer's Month. And IDSwest, *Homes & Living Magazine*, Alair Homes and Modern 604 will present a cutting-edge laneway home that will be auctioned on **World Alzheimer's Day (Sept. 21)**. All net proceeds will go to the Alzheimer Society of B.C. See [idswest.com/laneway](http://idswest.com/laneway) for details.

To volunteer with, fundraise for or become an advocate with the Alzheimer Society of B.C., visit [www.alzheimerbc.org](http://www.alzheimerbc.org). The Society is here for B.C. to provide Help for Today... *Hope for Tomorrow...*<sup>®</sup>

Caregivers and Society leaders are **available for interview** throughout September. **Photos and video** are also available upon request.

### **About Dementia**

Dementia is a term that describes a general group of brain disorders. Symptoms include the loss of memory, impaired judgment, and changes in behaviour and personality. Dementia is progressive, degenerative and eventually terminal. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia accounting for almost two-thirds of dementias in Canada today.

### **About the Alzheimer Society of B.C.**

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. provides a provincial network of support and education for families impacted by dementia and people concerned about memory loss. Communities across the province count on the Society for support services, information and education programs, advocacy to improve dementia care in B.C., and to fund research to find the causes and cures. As part of a national federation, the Society is a leading health authority on the disease in Canada.

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