

Alzheimer’s Society To Make Whitby “Dementia Friendly”



by Barbara Howe

The Alzheimer’s Society Durham Region (ASDR) is trying to make Whitby Canada’s first “dementia friendly” community, using funds received from the mayor’s summer golf tournament. As many as 10,000 Durham families are affected by the disease and the organization has provided support for 30 years.

The society expanded into Brooklin on Oct. 11 with a monthly Caregiver Support Group at the Court of Brooklin Retirement Home. The aim is to provide an opportunity to exchange information and concerns in an empathetic environment.

The ASDR is also working on a Blue Umbrella Program, an initiative that will reach out to corporations, retailers, and businesses to train employees on how to communicate with someone with dementia. Once the training is complete, they will be given a blue umbrella plaque to display.

The person with dementia will get a list of dementia friendly businesses once they access the ASDR intake program. They will also have a choice to wear a blue umbrella pin to identify themselves to the participating businesses. According to Christie May, ASDR’s Director of Philanthropy, this is important because “You can’t tell someone has dementia by looking at them.”

“It is a long, drawn-out, uncomfortable disease,” she says. “It can span 10-12 years and, in the meantime, people have to live their lives. This means they still have to cope with doing their banking, shopping and ordering meals in restaurants.”

Alzheimer’s is a progressive, degenerative brain disease, most common in a larger group of disorders known as “dementias”. It affects hundreds of thousands of Canadians, has no cure and limited medication. It eventually affects all aspects of a person’s life; how they think, feel and act. And it is fatal. Some have described it as a world epidemic, yet people are reluctant to talk about it.

It usually occurs in people over the age of 65, but can strike people in their forties. However, there is growing evidence that healthy lifestyle choices may slow the rate of progression. It is also important to have access to support and services to optimize the patient’s quality of life.

“It is very overwhelming and people do come to us when they are in the highest level of stress,” says Jessica Scheffee, ASDR’s fundraising and communications coordinator. “If anyone knows anything about our office, it’s that they are not alone.”

Aside from caregiver support groups, the society is keen to promote other family support and recreational programs such as the “Walking Buddies” program., Another, the “Minds in Motion” program, encompasses physical and mental stimulation activities for the patient and caregiver.

Jill Czuczman is a Brooklin resident whose husband, Dave, was diagnosed with Frontotemporal Dementia in May, 2015, at age 49. He is no longer able to work. “There’s still so much stigma attached to dementia,” Czuczman says. She and her husband have accessed both ASDR programs. “I like that we get together and everybody gets to chat about what’s happening with them. It’s just a different way of connecting.”

“The Walking Buddies” fall program has just ended, but Czuczman, the mother of two young adults, notes how much she enjoyed the 90-minute walks throughout Durham, from Bowmanville to Pickering. However, she would like to see more drop-in programs and ones in which the care partner was not required.

Music is also important for those diagnosed with dementia-related illnesses.

The society offers an “iPod Music and Memory” program where the society downloads a chosen playlist from the client to an iPod. “They say that the feeling of nostalgia listening to music in the era which they grew up can do a world of good,” said May. There is even a choir program which culminates in a concert performed by the clients.

Over half a million people are living with dementia, with 25,000 new cases diagnosed each year, according to the Alzheimer’s Society of Canada. Some warning signs are:

- Memory loss that affects day-to-day abilities.
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks – have trouble preparing a meal of playing a game.
- Problems with language – forgetting words or substituting words.
- Impaired Judgement – wearing heavy clothing on a hot day.
- Problems with abstract thinking – not understanding numbers or how they are used.
- Misplacing things – putting things in inappropriate places, an iron in the freezer for example.
- Changes in mood and behavior – severe and varied mood swings.
- Changes in personality – apathy, fearfulness or acting out of character.



Jessica Scheffee (left), Fundraising and Communications Coordinator, and Christie May, Director of Philanthropy, in front of artwork created by participants in one of their programs.

- Loss of initiative – may become passive, apathetic or require cues to become involved.

The main message to anyone who has a friend or family member affected by Alzheimer’s is to know that “we are here for them.” “We want to hear from them and we want to support them,” adds May.

ASDR also has open positions for volunteers in a variety of roles from office administration to support workers in recreational programs. For more information, contact **905-576-2567**.

Road Closure Notice Coronation Road

Effective Monday November 7, 2016 to January, 2019

Coronation Road, from Taunton Road to Rossland Road, will be permanently closed to traffic for a minimum fifteen (15) month period to facilitate the safe and efficient re-construction of the road and installation of Municipal/Regional infrastructure.

Traffic control signage will be in place to direct motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians to use alternate routes. Local access will be provided to Taunton Road West only.



Figure 1 - Map of Closure Area

During construction, access to local residences within the construction area will be open and maintained. Emergency services have been advised of the closure and proposed construction activity. Access by emergency services (Police, Fire, and Ambulance), postal delivery, and waste collection will remain unaffected during this time.

We thank you for your understanding and cooperation for the duration of this project.

Questions or concerns should be directed to:



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Phone: 905.475.1900

**Town of Whitby
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Phone: 905.430.4307

