

# ADVISORY SPOTLIGHT **KATHIE**

*We have been shining a spotlight on the individuals who make up our wonderful Advisory Group who use their lived experiences with dementia or cognitive change to shape the work we do at the Alzheimer Society. Please enjoy getting to know Kathie!*

Hello, my name is Kathie. As a retired nurse, I spent my life caring for others and mentoring in the field. My nursing background influenced my decision to be proactive when I noticed small memory changes like repeating questions or forgetting words. These subtle shifts might have been overlooked if not for my nursing experience and personal connection to dementia through my mother and grandmother.

One of the most important things I would tell someone noticing cognitive changes is to talk to someone. My husband Jean has helped me the most, he's my biggest support! Keeping perspective can be hard during difficult times, but we focus on the present, asking what will help us feel better right now. For me, it's reading and deep breaths, but for others, it might be music, walking, or writing.

Through the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region, I've found strength, understanding, and hope especially through programs like Beyond Words, Learning the Ropes, Minds in Motion, and the Wellness Program. These programs help me open up about my experiences. For many, it's the first time we can speak openly without fear of judgment. Some days I arrive feeling unsettled from not remembering something, but once I'm there, I feel lighter and leave those worries behind.

What I appreciate most in these programs is the feeling of being heard and that people listen without judging or trying to fix me. Often, others offer solutions, but at the Alzheimer Society, I can talk about my memory challenges and simply be heard. I feel validated. We talk a lot, but we also have fun! We share memories, laugh, smile—and then laugh some more. A wicked sense of humour helps! My involvement in Alzheimer Society programming led me to the Client Advisory Committee for people living with cognitive change. As a new member, I'll provide advocacy and guidance to peers, the Society, and the broader community.

If you or a loved one is experiencing memory loss, know that help is available and it's okay to ask. Reaching out to the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region gave me the strength and clarity I needed to move forward with confidence.

*We are so appreciative of Kathie for sharing some of her story with us. She has so much more to share and we hope you have the pleasure of getting to know her more.*