

In the **LOOP**
SUMMER 2023

40 YEARS
Société Alzheimer Society
NOVA SCOTIA

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NOVA SCOTIA



In this issue:

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- Human Connection Drives Dementia Research ...and more!

SUMMER 2023

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Dear Dementia Sector - *Mark your calendars!*

We look forward to hosting you either in person or online at our hybrid 34th Annual Dementia Care Conference on:

Thursday, October 26, 2023

Stay tuned for program details and registration.

Message from our CEO: Thinking differently about dementia support

The Landmark Study, released in the fall of 2022, was the first new data on dementia rates in Canada in 12 years. It shows us that we need to change the way we think.

The report estimated that over 16,000 Nova Scotians live with dementia. With challenges to accessing healthcare, we know this number is likely higher.

The study also provided startling projections for future dementia data. It estimated that the number of Nova Scotians living with dementia will almost double over the next 30 years.

This is a major healthcare issue in our province. Many people, especially in rural and equity-seeking communities, don't have access to the support they need.

To handle the increasing need for support, we need to think differently about how that support is provided. We'll continue to grow our current programs to reach more people, but we also need to support at a system level.

As we think about the future needs of Nova Scotians living with dementia, we make these commitments:

- Build a stronger presence in rural areas and with equity-seeking communities.
- Create community-level support and engage Nova Scotians living with dementia in the places they call home.
- Promote brain health – the Landmark Study shows that if we delay the onset of dementia through risk reduction, we can reduce the projected increases.

We don't have all the answers. Solving these major, deep-rooted issues is a long and complex process. **WE NEED YOU! We can't do this alone.** We're asking you to join us in our goal to create a network of Dementia Champions across the province.

Program delivery, education and fundraising are all key to the work we do. A connected network of Dementia Champions can work together to have the greatest impact on people living with dementia and care partners across Nova Scotia.



John Britton, CEO



Stay 'in the loop' on this initiative and everything else at ASNS by signing up for our bi-weekly e-newsletter at alzheimer.ca/ns/intheloop.

Meaningful Visits for Summertime Fun

Catherine Shepherd

Regional Coordinator, Cape Breton
Provincial Lead, First Link® Outreach

*Originally published in
the Cape Breton Post*



“Summertime, and the Livin’ is Easy...”

Composer George Gershwin must have loved summer. And why not? Sunshine, flowers, birds, barbeques, berries, family coming home – there is so much to appreciate and enjoy.

When you’re a care partner for a person living with dementia, summertime can also be a time of added stressors. Fitting in new plans and activities can throw a curveball into our routines. Whether we welcome visitors from near and far, or go out to a community barbeque, it’s important to keep in mind that everyone can still have an enjoyable time.

By doing some pre-planning, you will be able to enjoy meaningful and memorable summertime activities. I spoke with one of our Client Services Coordinators, Melissa Ray, for some suggestions to make the most of the summer season.

Melissa notes that a person living with dementia may have a better time of day in which to receive company or to go out. Try fitting in activities around these times to better enjoy whatever activity you’ve planned.

When company is visiting, turn off any background noise to make the visit peaceful and less confusing. If you're visiting someone in long term care, include others in the visit who may live far away by bringing photos, letters or even taking part in a video call.

"You can try prompting emotional memory by engaging the senses," says Melissa.

"Hearing an old song, looking at photos or the smell of something baking in the oven can bring back fond memories."

Keep in mind that quiet time during a visit can be very meaningful. Not all communication needs to be verbal; sometimes holding hands is worth a thousand words.

"Though a person living with dementia may not remember the details of your visit, they will be left with the feelings that your time together evokes," says Melissa.

A simple walk around your yard can be a meaningful summer activity. You could venture a little further to enjoy the neighbourhood. Regular exercise can help use up extra energy and may help a person sleep better.

Getting outside in nature, watching the bees or flowers, seeing birds flying, or listening to water lapping on the shore can nourish everyone. Look for places that have a shaded area and include a place to stop and rest along your way.

Remember that it's important to stay hydrated especially during warm summer days. Pack some extra water and snacks and don't forget the sunscreen.

If you do find your visit comes with some stress, try to meet the person with dementia where they are. In other words, agree with them on what year it might be, or who may be coming to visit.

Sometimes a 10-minute visit is all it takes to help someone feel better in their day. A visit doesn't have to be long to be meaningful.

I hope you will have a pleasant summertime engaging in activities that bring you joy. Remember, it's just as important to take care of yourself. If you're still feeling stressed about it all, don't hesitate to reach out to our InfoLine staff (1-800-611-6345) who can offer support and information to help you get through the rougher patches.



2023 IG WEALTH MANAGEMENT WALK FOR ALZHEIMER'S BRINGS OUR COMMUNITIES TOGETHER



Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's a huge success!

To all of our participants, volunteers, staff, sponsors and every single person who made a donation and raised awareness, none of this would be possible without you!

In addition to raising critical funds, the Walk was a wonderful way to bring our diverse communities together and challenge the stigma of dementia.

There are over 16,000 Nova Scotians living with dementia, and thousands more who care for and support them. With these numbers set to nearly double over the next 30 years, the success of our Walk is more impactful than ever.





With your support, we can continue offering crucial support and services for Nova Scotians living with dementia and their families. Together, we've raised

OVER \$200,000!

SIX LOCATIONS

85 TEAMS

700 PARTICIPANTS



Human Connection Drives Dementia Research

We are committed to supporting research in dementia, as well as acknowledging the work of people who have chosen to do research in this field. As a means of honouring this commitment, we are pleased to offer three awards to students pursuing dementia research in Nova Scotia.

This year's Student Research Award recipients shared the experiences that inspired them to pursue dementia research. From work placements to diagnoses in the family, each student showed how human connection drives dementia research forward. Nova Scotia is fortunate to have these passionate individuals in our research community.

We look forward to showcasing these emerging researchers at our Annual Provincial Conference on October 26, 2023!

Phyllis Horton Graduate Student Research Award Recipient



Felicia Tembo
Master of Arts in Sociology
Acadia University

My passion for dementia research stems from personal experience, as my grandmother's diagnosis had a profound impact on our family. Witnessing her struggle with memory loss and cognitive decline fueled my curiosity and commitment to contribute to the field.

My thesis, supervised by Dr. Rebecca Casey, explores the challenges faced by informal caregivers in rural areas and the potential of technology to alleviate those challenges. With the rapid advancements in technology, I aim to contribute to evidence-based practices that enhance the lives of older adults and their caregivers. I plan to pursue a career in health informatics, focusing on gerontology, as it holds immense potential to improve healthcare outcomes and quality of life for individuals, families, and communities affected by dementia.

Abe Leventhal Undergraduate Student Research Award Recipients

**Amy Meister**

Bachelor of Science in Nursing
Dalhousie University

My interest in dementia was sparked during my first clinical experience in nursing school at a long-term care facility. I hadn't previously encountered people living with dementia, and immediately became committed to building person-centred care skills and pursuing self-directed education regarding dementia care.

My project, supervised by Dr. Elaine Moody, is a scoping review on dementia-care in primary care. It will outline how primary care clinics can successfully implement interventions to improve the quality of life of people living with dementia in the community. I plan on completing my MSc in Nursing, then studying to become a nurse practitioner. I am passionate and ready to make changes in policy, practices, and the culture surrounding people living with dementia.

**Ethan Hume**

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology,
St. Francis Xavier University

My interest in sociology stems from my personal journey of loss, trauma, and resilience. I lost my parents at a young age - my father to cancer and my mother to early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Through my studies, I've embarked on a critical healing journey to understand social determinants of health.

My project, supervised by Dr. Katie Aubrecht, focused on improving support services for individuals and families affected by dementia. I observed a lack of recognition of the humanity of those with dementia, inspiring me to uncover and address inequalities and harm. As I prepare for my MA in Sociology at Western University, I am eagerly committed to contributing to a collective effort for social justice and transformation.

Mary's Story: How A Dementia Friendly Community Can Make an Impact

Beth House

Lead, Dementia-Friendly Communities

We don't usually publish fiction in our newsletter, but this narrative paints such a clear picture of what a Dementia Friendly Community could be! This fictional story was written by our very own Beth House as part of the *Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative* interactive online course facilitated by The Goodman Center. Participants learn about the importance of narrative as a form of communication, how to tell effective stories, and how to use stories in virtually all aspects of their day-to-day work.



Mary, an energetic retired minister in her 70s, sets down her purse with a smile and a contented sigh. She just had a wonderful morning walking dogs for the local animal shelter, which always brings her such joy. Mary starts preparing her lunch before she heads out again to speak at her church.

Thirty minutes later, as Mary is getting ready to go, her daughter Joanna calls. Mary answers the phone in an uncharacteristically agitated state.

"I can't remember what I did with my keys," Mary complains. "I'm supposed to be speaking at the church in an hour and I need them to lock up before I walk down. I just had them!"

"That isn't like you," Joanna says. "Although, you haven't been quite yourself since Dad passed away last year. Why don't you make a doctor's appointment to see if they have any suggestions that might help?"

A few months later, Mary sits in the doctor's office. After blood work, various tests and scans, Mary's doctor makes eye contact with her and very gently says, "I'm sorry to tell you that you have dementia."

Mary gripped her daughter's hand tighter. That's the last thing she took in, even though the doctor went on to talk about medications and living well with the diagnosis.

Mary hides away for the next few months, unable to process this earth-shattering diagnosis. She distances herself from friends and family and skips activities she used to enjoy like volunteering at the local animal shelter, speaking at her church and visiting the local shops in her community. Mary knows her daughter is worried about her and wishes this diagnosis had never happened.

“Mom,” Joanna says, sitting at her mother’s kitchen table. Her mother is still in her bathrobe at 3:00 p.m. “I have some information from the Alzheimer Society about your dementia and suggestions for how to continue to live well.”



As they talk and read about other people living with dementia, Mary begins to think that maybe this isn’t the end after all. With her daughter’s support, Mary starts to use some of the suggestions they read about: a calendar with appointments, a notebook for jotting everything down, noticing what makes Mary’s symptoms worse and what helps.

Mary settles into a new routine with strategies that are helping. She is starting to feel like she’s got a little more control over things.

Mary no longer drives. Though she’s been on the bus several times with friends, she misses the autonomy she once knew. That is why, on her granddaughter’s 15th birthday, Mary ventures out alone. She plans to take the bus to one of her favourite shops, determined to buy her granddaughter a birthday present.

As Mary climbs on the bus, nervous, her purse slips from her hand and falls to the floor. “Hurry up, there’s people behind you,” the driver says gruffly. Mary, embarrassed, anxiously picks up her purse. Suddenly, she can’t remember where she put her bus ticket. Mary frantically searches her pockets, being jostled by the people trying to get past her, finally coming up with the ticket she put in her breast pocket so she’d know where to find it. Mary takes a seat near the back, a little out of sorts and unsettled.

Still shaken, Mary misses her stop and has to walk back a block to the shop. Taking a deep breath, she’s looking forward to browsing the store with all the beautiful local art pieces and picking something out for her granddaughter’s birthday. While happily browsing the shop, Mary finds a beautiful figurine that her granddaughter will adore and takes it up to the counter.

Speaking quickly while looking away, the cashier tells Mary, "That's for display." Mary, confused, doesn't know what she means so she pulls out her wallet to pay.

"I said you can't buy that," the cashier repeats impatiently. A flustered and embarrassed Mary puts her wallet away and leaves the store.

Overwhelmed and humiliated, Mary gets to the street she's walked many times and suddenly isn't sure which way to go. Confused, she sees a bench and sits down and calls her daughter crying. "I can't do this," she explains. "I was foolish to think a silly old woman like me would be able to do this on my own."

Using the GPS locator that Mary installed on her phone, Joanna finds her mother still sitting on the bench, engaged in a lively discussion with a young man. Mary calls Joanna over and introduces her to Josh, who works with the Alzheimer Society. "All the times I've been to this store and I never noticed the Alzheimer Society right across the street."

"I saw your mother sitting her for a long time seeming upset and came out to see if she needed anything," says Josh. Mary shared that Josh had been telling her about the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative the society has launched. It was made to help the general public, transit and retail workers understand physical and social supports that can help reduce anxiety for people living with dementia.

Mary, now armed with Dementia Friendly community tools and resources, decides to head out again the next day to buy the present for her granddaughter.



Mary presents her 'Thank you for your Patience' card to the bus driver, which explains that she has a memory condition and may need an extra moment. After reading it, he warmly invites her to step further in off to the side and take her time while the other riders quickly go past. The driver points out the empty seats near the front and asks if she'd like him to let her know when her stop is getting close.

Mary waves thank you to the driver as she gets off the bus and enters the shop with a smile. The cashier looks up as Mary walks over to see if she needs a hand. Mary says that she's looking for a gift for her granddaughter. "She would love something like that," says Mary, pointing to the figurine she picked up last time. The cashier explains, "that one is the display model – we have more for sale over here. Let me show you."



The cashier says that Josh from the Alzheimer Society came by with a very informative presentation for their staff on the simple ways they can make their shop more dementia friendly and how easy it is for us to change some of the ways we interact. "I noticed that you gave me time to understand what you were saying," says Mary.

When Mary returns home, she sees that Joanna has stopped by for a visit. "Oh Joanna," Mary says. "I've had the best day. Let me tell you all about it!"

Learn more about our dementia friendly communities initiative and some of the resources mentioned in this story at alzheimer.ca/ns/dfc.

Questions about dementia?

We are here to help.

The province-wide InfoLine is a confidential service provided by a team of knowledgeable and caring staff.

InfoLine provides:

- Help navigating the dementia journey
- Ongoing individualized support
- Registration for Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia programs
- Connection to community-based services
- Culturally diverse materials in multiple languages (print or online)
- Information about:
 - Any type of dementia
 - Maintaining brain health
 - Getting a diagnosis
 - Planning for the future
 - Maintaining independence
 - Tips and strategies for living well



InfoLine
1-800-611-6345

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40 Years of Impact

Dear Reader,

In the last issue of In the Loop, you heard from my friend, Kevin Keefe, the very first President of the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia board of directors. Kevin shared details of the humble beginnings of the Society, and the immense journey we have been on. From convening a group of volunteers in a church basement 40 years ago to supporting thousands of Nova Scotians on the dementia journey today.



I am honoured to have been the board chair for the last three years. In that time, and the 37 years that came before, the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia has grown and changed in a lot of ways, thanks to our generous donors and supporters. With your help, we continue to:

- Help thousands of people via our toll-free, confidential InfoLine, where Nova Scotians can get timely support from trained professionals in navigating their journey.
- Deliver a wide range of meaningful education and support programs for people with dementia and their care partners. We help to equip them with information and strategies throughout their journey.
- Provide frontline dementia care staff with a person-centered understanding of dementia.

I have also seen firsthand how the Society team navigated the pandemic, ensuring the continuation of services, prioritizing client support, and providing new approaches to connect in extremely challenging times.

We will always continue to support Nova Scotians on the dementia journey. And we need your help to do it.

There is so much more to do, especially with the alarming knowledge that the number of Nova Scotians living with dementia will nearly double over the next 30 years.

Your donation today will support people currently on their dementia journey, and those to come in the future.

Thank you for your support as we commit to our next 40 years!

Mark Gillis
Mark Gillis

Make a Donation

Name: _____

Full mailing address: _____

Yes! You can count on me to help ensure that caregivers, family members, and those living with dementia get the support they need.

I would like to support the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia with a **one time** gift of:

☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$ _____

OR

I would like to support the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia with a **monthly** gift of:

☐ \$10 ☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$ _____

You can stop your monthly gift at anytime by contacting us by phone or email.

PAYMENT INFORMATION:

☐ I have enclosed a cheque payable to the Alzheimer Socceity of Nova Scotia

OR

☐ Please charge my donation to my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX

Cardholder name: _____

Card number: _____

Expiry: ____/____ CVC: _____

Cardholder signature: _____

☐ I prefer to receive my official tax receipt by email to help reduce administrative costs.
My email address is: _____

Thank you! Please return to: **Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia**
112-2719 Gladstone St.
Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3K 4W6

You can also make your secure donation at www.alzheimer.ca/ns/donate.

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112-2719 Gladstone St, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 4W6
902-422-7961 or 1-800-611-6345 (toll free within NS)

No one should face dementia alone.

*Read how you make that possible in
our latest newsletter.*

