

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Rising need for help and support for those on the dementia journey during the pandemic**  
*Alzheimer Society numbers rise, while Nova Scotians living with dementia use technology to make connections during COVID-19*

**Halifax, N.S. / January 5, 2021** – Dementia can be an isolating disease for the people living with dementia and their caregivers. What happens when a pandemic hits, and necessary physical distancing increases that isolation?

Between March and December 2020, the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia saw a consistent demand for online programs that could be accessed from the comfort of clients' homes. Calls to the free, confidential, counselling support line were up 20 per cent. Over 30 online public education sessions were held in three languages. Caregiver support groups were moved to Zoom and welcomed 83 participants.

"Throughout the pandemic we were committed to remaining fully operational, and being there to support our clients," said Linda Bird, Director of Programs & Services at the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia. "We moved more resources to our telephone support line, and as in-person programming wasn't possible, we adapted our education and support programs and moved them online. As we enter a new year and the pandemic continues, we continue to be here for Nova Scotians on the dementia journey."

January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month, and the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia will be reflecting on the changes over the past year and how those changes will shape our ongoing program delivery. This will spark conversations about dementia, aiming to get people talking more comfortably and openly about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Because talking about it, leads to education and support.

For people living with dementia, adapting to our new way of living this past year was especially difficult. But through the virtual programs that the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia ran, those with dementia were not alone.

Faye Forbes, an Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia board member, lives with Alzheimer's disease. Before the pandemic, she was part of *Coffee and Conversation*, a social group for people with dementia that met monthly. When the program moved online, they picked up right where they left off.

"Doing it on Zoom we could chat the same way that we did in person, and the friendships and things that developed were awesome," says Forbes. "The conversations were exactly the same as they would have been in person. We did some sharing, we did some supporting, we had some laughs. Everyone really got a lot out of it. We met some new people and reacquainted ourselves with some old friends."

Sandra Britten, an advocate for the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia, lives with Lewy body dementia and is also part of the online social group.

“Even though we can’t be with each other or see each other in person, being able to see them on the screen, see their facial expressions and their body movement is so much better than having a telephone conference call,” says Britten.

To learn more about Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia programs and offerings, visit [www.alzheimer.ca/ns](http://www.alzheimer.ca/ns).

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#### **ABOUT THE ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF NOVA SCOTIA**

The Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia is a not-for-profit health charity serving Nova Scotians impacted by Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. Active in communities across the province, the Society offers help for today through programs and services for people living with dementia and hope for tomorrow by funding research to find the cause and the cure.

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#### **Available for Interview:**

Linda Bird, Director of Programs & Services, Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia

Faye Forbes, living with Alzheimer’s disease

Sandra Britten, living with Lewy body dementia