

**NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Thursday September 3, 2015

## **The Ascent for Alzheimer's team is ready to take on Mt. Kilimanjaro**

**Vancouver, B.C.** – Eight British Columbians have come together for a common purpose: the *Ascent for Alzheimer's*. Very soon, these eight team members will be leaving Canada for Tanzania, where they'll hike Mt. Kilimanjaro, the tallest mountain in Africa. They've spent months in training for the expedition along the Rongai route to the highest peak, Uhuru, assisted by a team of experienced local guides and Canadian mountaineer Sue Oakey.

The *Ascent for Alzheimer's* is an annual hiking expedition to spread awareness for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Team members commit to raising a minimum of \$10,000 each to help ensure that support services and education are available to the over 70,000 British Columbians impacted by dementia. The *Ascent* is an once-in-a-lifetime experience and a commitment to ensure that no one on the dementia journey is ever alone.

"The team's dedication to raising funds reflects the importance of the cause," says Maria Howard, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. "We can't thank them enough for their tireless work."

"I didn't realize how many people were affected by Alzheimer's until my dad got it," says team member Doug Spencer, who will be hiking alongside his wife Lisa Heiberg. As part of their fundraising, they held a memorial golf tournament – Doug's father was an avid golfer – and raised over \$7,000.

"Fundraising makes you realize all the little networks you're connected to," Lisa says.

Once they reach Tanzania, the *Ascent* team will be spending some in Marangu Village before they begin their journey. The hike itself takes seven days, starting on September 22 until September 29. During the journey, the team will be making daily calls to keep their supporters back in Canada updated on their progress up Mt. Kilimanjaro. While the mountain has an incredibly diverse ecology including rain forests and alpine deserts, the Rongai route takes the team up the northern side of the mountain where the environment is much drier. Taking a full seven days to make the trip helps minimize altitude sickness and lets them acclimatize better. Their progress will be charted on the team's *Ascent* blog, [www.ascentbc.ca/ascent-blog](http://www.ascentbc.ca/ascent-blog).

As oxygen levels change with the altitude, the hike can simulate the effects of dementia on the brain – hitting home the symbolism of the *Ascent for Alzheimer's*. With the number of people impacted by dementia increasing every year and more than 10,000

British Columbians diagnosed before they reach the age of 65, being able to understand and educate about the impact that dementia has never been more important. The *Ascent* team is dedicated to ensuring that people living with dementia receive the support they need.

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For more information about the *Ascent for Alzheimer's*, visit [www.ascentbc.ca](http://www.ascentbc.ca). Photos are available for use, and Doug Spencer and Lisa Heiberg have limited availability for interview requests with notice until September 12, 2015.

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### **About Ascent for Alzheimer's**

The Ascent for Alzheimer's is an annual hike to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro to raise funds for support services and education for people living with dementia.

### **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 authority on the disease in Canada.



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