

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

Youth advocate spreads the word during Alzheimer's Awareness Month

Vancouver, B.C. – January is Alzheimer's Awareness Month and the Alzheimer Society of B.C. is celebrating the work being done by people of all ages who want to build Dementia-Friendly Communities. Sixty per cent of people with dementia still live in the community, and by lowering stigma and barriers – both social and physical – we can support them in enjoying good quality of life.

“People with dementia may face challenges with everyday activities like shopping, banking, going to restaurants or visiting their local post office,” says Maria Howard, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. “This can be isolating for the person with dementia, as well as for care partners.” With the number of British Columbians impacted by dementia growing each year, it's increasingly important to change this through information, compassion and community engagement.

Dementia-Friendly Communities can be cities, companies, and even schools. At New Westminster Secondary School, youth advocate Iva Demirova is spreading awareness and showing herself to be a community leader who will help B.C. become truly dementia-friendly.

Iva was initially drawn to the youth-run Initiative for Neuroscience and Dementia (IND) because of her love of science, but in seeking to learn more, she was able to connect with her grandmother over the experience of caring for Iva's late grandfather.

Iva was inspired to start a chapter of the IND in her school in Grade 10. The club quickly grew to 20 members and continues to grow. “It means we'll be able to hold more fundraisers and awareness events throughout the year,” says Iva. The IND is focused on spreading awareness and raising funds for research. “We hope to help everyone feel more included in our community.”

“Iva, and other young people like her, working to spread awareness is incredibly important,” says Howard. “The more people we can educate about the disease, the easier it is to lower stigma and build inclusive communities.”

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is working with New Westminster, Vancouver and other communities across the province to become dementia-friendly. Throughout January, the Society is encouraging British Columbians to #BecomeAFriend to people with dementia. To learn more about becoming dementia-friendly, or to learn other ways of helping support British Columbians living with the disease – such as participating in the *Investors Group Walk for Alzheimer's* in May – visit alzheimerbc.org.

Campaign hashtag: #BecomeAFriend

Society leaders and other spokespeople, including Maria Howard and Iva Demirova, are available for interview throughout January.

Media Contact

Ben Rawluk
Coordinator, Marketing and Communications
Alzheimer Society of B.C.
Phone: 604-742-4912 | Cell: 604-812-4497
Email: brawluk@alzheimerbc.org
Website: www.alzheimerbc.org

About Dementia Friends

A Dementia Friend is someone who takes the time to understand five things about dementia:

1. Dementia is not a natural part of aging.
2. Dementia isn't just memory loss – it can affect thinking, communicating and everyday activities.
3. It is possible to live well with dementia.
4. There is more to a person than a diagnosis of dementia.
5. The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is here to help people with dementia and their care partners.

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.





ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF B.C.
#300 – 828 West 8th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 1E2
TEL: 604-681-6530 FAX: 604-669-6907 TOLL FREE: 1-800-667-3742
WEBSITE: www.alzheimerbc.org E-MAIL: info@alzheimerbc.org
CHARITABLE REGISTRATION BN #11878 4891 RR0001