

PHOTO RELEASE

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Maria Shriver urges Vancouverites to take action on dementia

Vancouver, BC – This past weekend, guests attended a private event with Maria Shriver, where she talked about what motivates her every day to grow awareness of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. Funds were raised in support of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. and Shriver’s organization, The Women’s Alzheimer’s Movement.

The event was organized by long-time Alzheimer Society supporter, Leah O’Neill. “My passion for raising awareness and funds for Alzheimer’s disease started in 2007, when my father was diagnosed with the illness. In 2011 my dad passed away from the devastating disease that robbed him of his past and his future,” said O’Neill. “I vowed I never wanted to get Alzheimer’s disease or have anyone else I know get it. Research and development is so critically important at this time to find a cure.”



*Left to right:
John and Leah
O’Neill, Dr.
Haakon
Nygaard, Maria
Shriver, Maria
Howard*

Shriver discussed her connection to the disease and the current research she is most excited about. In particular, she said she is committed to raising awareness of the fact that Alzheimer’s disproportionately affects women. Shriver founded her organization The Women’s Alzheimer’s Movement and its annual event Move For Minds to raise awareness and funds for women-based research.

In light of the anticipated cost of dementia on countries and health-care systems worldwide, Shriver urged everyone to take action to reduce their own risk and to spread the word. “There is a role for all of us,” she said. “Whether you are a business owner, a mother, daughter, son or sibling, you can share awareness of dementia, donate to support the cause, or ask your elected official what they are going to do about it.”

Also at the event, Alzheimer Society Chief Executive Officer, Maria Howard, and Dr. Haakon Nygaard, Charles E. Fipke Professor of Alzheimer’s Research at UBC, announced the specific research project that will receive support as a direct result of the funds raised. The project will develop a specific biomarker test, which is a diagnostic tool for Alzheimer’s disease. The new test is being developed in the clinical lab at St Paul’s Hospital, in collaboration with neurologists at the Centre for Brain Health, in order to directly impact patient care. This research aims to expedite the quest for new therapeutics by helping ensure that the right populations are enrolled in clinical trials. Having a confident diagnosis also empowers people to access available resources and the opportunity to self-direct long-term care, social and financial planning.

“We are so grateful that Maria Shriver was able to share her passion for the cause – and for the impact that this event has had on raising awareness and raising funds,” said Howard. “We know that before there is a *cure*, there is *care*: ensuring that people living with the disease are welcomed, acknowledged and included, and that families affected by it are supported. This event has helped us provide and pursue both of these things.”

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Dr. Haakon Nygaard and Maria Howard are available for interviews on research and on the support and resources available for people with dementia in B.C. High resolution images are available on request.

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About dementia

Dementia is an umbrella term for a set of symptoms that are caused by disorders affecting the brain. Symptoms may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language, severe enough to reduce a person’s ability to perform everyday activities. A person with dementia may also experience changes in mood or behaviour. Dementia is not a specific disease but can include Alzheimer’s disease, vascular dementia, Lewy body disease, frontotemporal dementia and others. These conditions can have similar and overlapping symptoms.

About the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Families across British Columbia are affected by Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias. The Alzheimer Society of B.C.’s ultimate vision is a world without dementia; that vision begins with a

world where people living with the disease are welcomed, acknowledged and included. Working in communities throughout the province, the Society supports, educates and advocates for people with dementia, as well as enabling research into the disease. As part of a national federation, the Society is a leading authority on the disease in Canada.

About The Women's Alzheimer's Movement

The Women's Alzheimer's Movement is a global alliance of individuals, organizations, researchers, foundations and industry leaders who are exploring why women receive two-thirds of all the diagnoses of Alzheimer's disease. They believe that by answering the question of why women are disproportionately affected by Alzheimer's, they will unlock the other mysteries surrounding this mind-blowing disease and that will lead to a cure for all.



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