

MEDIA RELEASE

November 9, 2018

No one in British Columbia should have to face the dementia journey alone

Vancouver, B.C. (November 9, 2018) – Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect thousands of British Columbians, but asking for or receiving the diagnosis can be challenging and families often don’t know what to do. No one should have to face the dementia journey alone; that’s why the Alzheimer Society of B.C. offers the First Link® Dementia Helpline (1-800-936-6033) across the province.

A toll-free phone line, the First Link® Dementia Helpline is for anyone who lives with dementia or is a care partner to someone who does. It’s also for people concerned about their memory, people who work with people living with dementia or any member of the public who would like to know more.

“Someone might call in because they’re starting to see changes in themselves or someone close to them and want to learn more about the warning signs and how to get a diagnosis,” says Julie Cameron, Support and Education Coordinator for the Alzheimer Society of B.C.’s Vancouver Resource Centre. “Most callers are caregivers who need to know who to call or where to turn; we guide them towards services that will help them build the skills and confidence to live with dementia.”

Deanne Matthews called the helpline about a year after her mother Barb was diagnosed with dementia, when she and her sister started to notice changes in her mother’s ability to communicate. “We realized this was something we needed to start dealing with,” Deanne says. “We were looking to the long term, and had to start making decisions while my mother was still able to tell us what she wanted.”

The helpline is also a resource for people who haven’t felt comfortable reaching out because of fear. “They’re the people who haven’t reached out at all until it’s a crisis,” Julie says. “We walk them through scenarios and help them understand how they could respond to people living with dementia.”

People who call the helpline will be connected to the full range of services offered through the Alzheimer Society of B.C.’s First Link® dementia support, including support groups, community resources and education workshops for every stage of the journey. First Link® offers education like *Shaping the journey: living with dementia*®, a six-week series that Deanne was able to participate in with her mother. “It really helped us get prepared,” Deanne says. Deanne and Barb also participate in Minds in Motion®, a social and fitness program for people in the early stages of the disease to attend with their care partner.

No matter why a person calls the First Link® Dementia Helpline, Julie says that the goal is always the same: “to make sure that they get the support they need.”

People in B.C. who are concerned about dementia can call the First Link® Dementia Helpline (1-800-936-6033) or visit alzheimerbc.org, and are encouraged to speak with their health-care provider about whether or not a referral to First Link® dementia support would help them.

Interviews may be requested with Julie Cameron (Support and Education Coordinator).

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

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.

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.