

## **Special One-Time Funding Enhances the Society's Friendly Visiting Program By: Betty Batten, Volunteer Coordinator**

In the non-profit world, March is the month when funders will occasionally allocate special one-time funding, and for the Alzheimer Society, this is the year!! Despite rigid spending parameters and tight timelines, funding announcements such as this generates a flurry of planning, prioritizing and shopping for improvements that are otherwise beyond the scope of normal operating budgets.

Imagine my delight when told that a share of 2014 funding was coming my way to upgrade our Friendly Visiting resources. To this point, access to an on-site Activities Cupboard is shared between staff and volunteers. However, the inconvenience of making weekly trips to borrow or return items has limited volunteer use. Now, with these additional funds, it will be possible to supply a personal kit of activity resources to each volunteer for the duration of their Friendly Visiting commitment.

Poring over Senior Activities catalogues is rather like the childhood excitement of getting my turn when the Christmas Wishbook arrived. What to choose? So much to choose from – items that provide a create outlet, stimulate memory or physical movement. Activities that motivate skill retention or keep individuals busy with familiar tasks. Simple games, puzzles, quizzes and word searches, cue cards and colorful photos that produce familiar feelings and lead to reminiscing conversations. Volunteer training helps to prepare them for what to expect and how best to offer support, but this tool kit of practical visit ideas will be extremely helpful, adding additional stimulation and enjoyment for their client match.

As Program Coordinator, I hear the “heart” behind each new applicant and admire the caring men and women who make this Friendly Visiting Program possible. I recognize that by offering their gift of time to support individuals with a cognitive impairment, they forge relationships that are made unique by the degenerative nature of this disease. While they experience the fulfillment of helping others through a difficult life challenge, they also assume the associated “emotional risks”. Supporting an individual throughout the phases of deteriorating health and possible end of life takes courage and commitment. Yet the gift is so valuable and the rewards so precious. It is a delight to play even a small part in making this possible and a joy to provide our volunteers with additional tools to enhance their visits. Kits will be ready for distribution shortly and volunteers will be contacted accordingly.

Currently, our wait list for a volunteer visitor includes five females and seven males. If after browsing this article, your interest and empathy is peaked, please do not hesitate to investigate further. This is a rather unique program that is all about “fit” from both your perspective and that of the client. So, no obligation attached to exploring as a “possibility” to consider. I would be delighted to speak with you at 705-748-5131 or to receive your email inquiry at [betty@alzheimersociety.ca](mailto:betty@alzheimersociety.ca)

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