

Thornhill's Reshma Chetram is changing the stigma associated with Alzheimer's disease

September is World Alzheimer's Month, with the goal of raising awareness about the disease that affects more than 15,000 York Region residents

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AURORA, ON (Sept. 6, 2018) – In 2014, Thornhill's Reshma Chetram put her businesses on hold in order to take over Tarana Dance, which her mother Deviekha founded in 1989. Deviekha is living with young-onset dementia.

Reshma re-opened Tarana Dance in her parents' Markham home, teaching students classic North Indian dances. Reshma is still there as is Deviekha, who is introduced to each student as the principal of the school. Each student greets its founder with respect.

"All the kids (students) know who she is and are not afraid. They are aware of mental health and it's a very open conversation," says Reshma, who says she educates each new parent and child about Alzheimer's and other dementias. Reshma, who considers her mom her best friend, says while she watched things around her change and crumble, she says it's a "blessing to continue my mom's work and it's an honour. It's her legacy."

While Deviekha can no longer communicate in words, put music on and she is mouthing to the songs and smiling. "Each stage of the illness brings me different challenges. I say to her (mom), 'Look at you teaching me.' I am accepting it all as a little gift."

September is World Alzheimer Month with the goal of raising awareness and changing the stigma associated with a diagnosis. World Alzheimer Day kicks off Sept. 21 with Coffee Break, where people are encouraged to host an event to raise awareness and funds to help York Region residents living with Alzheimer's and other dementias and their families. Visit <http://bit.ly/CoffeeBreak18> for details.

-30-

About the Alzheimer Society York Region (AS York)

The Alzheimer Society of York Region is a leader in actively supporting individuals and families coping with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Our quality, dementia-specific DAY program services, enriched social work program and education opportunities is well respected.

Media contact:

Loren Freid, Chief Executive Officer, Alzheimer Society of York Region
Tel: 905-726-3477, ext. 223
Email: lfreid@alzheimer-york.com

More information: www.worldalzmonth.org

You can read more about Deviekha's story here: bit.ly/ChetramArticle
Canadian Charter of Rights for People With Dementia: <http://alzheimer.ca/en/york/Get-involved/The-Charter>