



*David and Linda Kaiser, far left, with their family.
David lived with Alzheimer's disease. He passed away in 2018.*

The Kaiser family raising funds to ensure programs and services are available to York Region residents impacted by dementia

Kaiser family is York Region's Honorary Family for this year's IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's

The Kaiser family knows they are fortunate. Their fun-loving dad, David, remained the same person throughout the 14 years he lived with Alzheimer's disease. He was mobile, happy, verbal and took care of himself. He still liked to kid around, flirt with the ladies and was a loving husband to his wife, Linda, and their children Laurie DiCarlo and Robyn Mogil and their families.

"I always said he had the nicer side of this horrible disease," Linda said.

Robyn agreed. "He was a wonderful person, funny and quirky, and that is how the disease was with him."

The Kaisers know the dementia journey isn't as easy for everyone. Linda saw the hardships first-hand through her support group and the people who attended the Alzheimer Society of York Region (AS York) Thornhill DAY program with David.

It's why Linda, Laurie, Robyn and their families are participating in this year's IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's, which is taking place Sunday, May 31 at noon.

Due to COVID-19, the walk is taking place in living rooms, backyards and neighbourhoods across the country. People are invited to register for a York Region walk at www.walkforalzheimers.ca and begin raising funds. Then, on walk day, they are encouraged to post pictures of themselves of social media jumping on the trampoline, skipping on the spot or walking in their neighbourhood, tagging AS York. This year, the Kaiser family are joining their walk in memory of their husband/father, who passed away Oct. 6, 2018.

Linda said this first year and bit without David has been difficult.

"I had been a caregiver for 14 years. I didn't know what to do with myself after (David) passed away." Linda said she still has good days and bad days, but what helped, she said, was joining a weekly

bereavement group at her local synagogue.

“I just found that whatever I was feeling, other people were feeling that as well.” Most importantly, the leader of the group shared with Linda a piece of advice she held onto: There is no time limit to grieve and no ending. You just have to carry on the best you can.

“I was with David for 47 years. He will always be with me; he will always be in my life.”

Linda met David in the mid-1960s and the pair began their five-year courtship before getting married.

“We were married 47 years all told. We had an extremely good life.”

In 1988, Linda went back to work doing marketing for various McDonald’s restaurants. Ten years later, Linda realized David, who ran his own business, wasn’t doing well on his own. She retired to help him. In 2005, David was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. In 2010, Linda discovered AS York’s DAY program.

The DAY program was “support for both of us. For David the program was wonderful.”

David went to the DAY program five days a week for eight years. He was picked up by Alvin, one of two AS York drivers who pick up clients in vans, funded by the Ontario Trillium Fund, and taken to the program.

“He just started the day really well with Alvin.”

David would participate in the music program – he was once caught on video dancing – but mainly he would sit down on his “couch” and hang out.

“It was good for both of us,” Linda said. “It was a period of time when I got things done, where he was safe. It was like a school day. He would go off at 8:30 (a.m.) and be home by 4 p.m.”

Linda said it is the quality of the program and the compassion and empathy of the staff that she values the most. She said Andrea Ubell, now the director of program and client services, but at the time was her social worker, ensured her and her family’s mental and physical well-being throughout their dementia journey.

“Andrea was the emotional rock for our family,” Robyn said. “She was always there, a phone call away. She understood the process to walk families through this disease. She understood next steps, my mom’s emotional needs, and my father’s.”

Linda said she and her girls feel blessed with the amount of time they had with their husband and father.

“We had a lot of time with David....years and years of being together, years of him laughing and being happy,” Linda said. “He being really sick was a matter of months out of the whole 14 years of the disease.”

Laurie agreed.

“It was very slow. I am very thankful we had that time with him. We had that time with family and the grandchildren.” She said she had time to tell her dad what she needed to before he passed away.

The family said they are also thankful for AS York for its support.

When David passed away, Linda asked people to donate to AS York in memory of her husband. The money raised was designated to replace “David’s couch”, as it was affectionately known, in the Thornhill DAY centre.

This year, Linda, Robyn and Laurie are the Honorary Family for the IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer’s for their commitment to AS York and people impacted by dementia.

Money raised by York Region walkers stays in York Region to help support family, friends and neighbours impacted by the disease.

Linda said her family is forever grateful to AS York staff and the programs and services it provides.

They are participating to ensure programs are available to anyone who needs them.

Robyn agreed, suggesting more awareness needs to be raised about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias.

“Power comes in numbers. The more people talk about it (dementia) and the more money raised” will ensure more families are helped.

“We know it works,” Laurie said.

Visit www.walkforalzheimers.ca to register for a York Region walk. Then begin raising funds in support of York Region residents impacted by dementia.

On walk day, visit www.walkforalzheimers.ca or at noon for a live broadcast. You are also invited to share your photos of your walk on social media using the hashtags #igwalkforalz #WalkOnline2020 and #ourconnectionsmatter and tag AS York on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/AlzheimerSocietyYork>); Instagram (alzheimeryr); and Twitter (@ASYork1) so we, too, can share what you are doing to help family, friends and neighbours impacted by dementia.

Visit <https://bit.ly/BattleCreekWarriors> to donate to the Kaiser family team.



Robyn, left, and Laurie with their dad, David.