

News Release



**For Immediate Release
Tuesday, May 14, 2013**

**Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan announces
increased government funding to the First Link[®]
program**

Regina, SK – The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan announced the Government of Saskatchewan's role in the expansion of the First Link[®] program, bringing the Government's commitment to \$400,000. The increase in funding will assist in the establishment of four additional Alzheimer Society Resources Centres in Swift Current, North Battleford, Prince Albert and Weyburn with service to Estevan. The additional funding will also help create Dementia Advisory Networks in each community a resource centre is located.

First Link[®] is a referral program to assist physicians, health and community service providers to directly link people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and their families to the Alzheimer Society for services and support at the time of diagnosis, or throughout the duration of the disease. Individuals and their families are linked to learning services and support as early as possible in the disease process.

Today in Saskatchewan, over 18,000 people are living with dementia. In 2012, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan provided services to over 1,622 clients from 222 different communities across Saskatchewan due in part to the help of the First Link[®] program.

The Government of Saskatchewan plays a vital role in the expansion of First Link[®] across Saskatchewan. "Every health care decision we make seeks to make a meaningful difference for patients and their families," says the Honourable Dustin Duncan, Minister of Health. "The proven success of the First Link program is exactly the type of patient-first approach that leads to a collaborative and responsive health system, and we are proud to make this investment in this important program".

Myrna Schellenberg, a caregiver to her late husband diagnosed with dementia remarks, "Without First Link, my husband and I may have missed out on critical and helpful information available through the Alzheimer Society as well as the kindness and understanding of the staff, who offered both emotional support and practical suggestions."

First Link[®] has also assisted the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan establishing partnerships with health care professionals and community partners. Dr. Andrew Kirk, Professor and Head of Neurology, University of Saskatchewan and member of the Rural and Remote Memory Clinic



says, “First Link is an invaluable addition to a patient’s care. People with dementia and their families need information and support in dealing with a very difficult diagnosis. First Link allows them to plan for the future and have a realistic view of what they can expect from their illness.”

“The Alzheimer Society is thrilled to receive funding for First Link from the provincial government,” says Joanne Bracken, CEO, Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan. “Together we can move forward with this valuable program that is so very important to help people from Saskatchewan access resources, support and information to assist them along their dementia journey. Caregivers need to realize that they don’t have to go through this alone, there is help available.” Alzheimer Society Resource Centres will be established and providing essential services to people affected by dementia by the end of September.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is the province’s leading dementia care and research charity. We provide support and education to people with dementia as well as their family and caregivers through peer group, telephone and individual support. We fund Saskatchewan-based and Canada-wide research focused on discovering a cause, a cure and improving the quality of life for those currently living with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia.

For more information about the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan and the First Link[®] program, please visit www.alzheimer.ca/sk.

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