

# Alzheimer Society

SASKATCHEWAN

Learn More Live Well



## Dementia Friendly Communities 2024 Highlight Report

"They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I believe it takes a community to support a person with dementia."

- Merle Wiley, Care Partner and Community Advocate

# Community Changes Everything



**Merle Wiley (right) pictured with our Dementia Community Coordinator (left) at the Town of Saltcoats building. Merle connected with the Alzheimer Society for support with advocating for more dementia friendly considerations in her community.**

In the Spring of 2022, the Town of Saltcoats invited the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan to deliver our ABC's of Dementia presentation to help local residents learn more about dementia warning signs and the importance of an early diagnosis.

After attending the presentation, Merle Wiley, a Saltcoats resident and care partner, began noticing areas in the community that could be enhanced to be more accessible and easy-to-navigate for people living with dementia and their care partners. Merle connected with us at the Alzheimer Society later in 2022 and asked for resources to help draft a letter to the Saltcoats Town Council regarding her community observations.

Merle's letter was well received – Town Council was quick to respond and invite Merle and our Dementia Community Coordinator to tour Town-sanctioned buildings and provide recommendations to increase the dementia friendliness within each environment.

The tour took place on February 28, 2023, and, since then, the Saltcoats' Administrative Office, Town Hall, library, and curling rink have worked to implement subtle but significant changes like supplementary signage and lighting, reducing mobility hazards, and adding other environmental considerations to support people living with dementia and their care partners.

**A dementia friendly community is a healthy community that understands the importance of an early diagnosis, can recognize the warning signs, takes action to help promote risk reduction and brain health, and is inclusive to people living with dementia, their family, friends, and other care partners.**

“If you focus on setting the tone of making everyone feel welcome and inclusive when they walk in the door, then everybody follows that lead. That is the atmosphere we try to create.”

**-Joan Michael, Saltcoats’ Library Head Librarian**

We were invited back to Saltcoats to deliver a second presentation about dementia friendly communities in October 2023.

The photo featured on the cover of this report is from that event. If you look closely, you’ll see Merle’s smiling face in the crowd. Thank you, Merle, for exemplifying what it means to be a community leader, and to the Town of Saltcoats for having open conversations about how to make their spaces and programming more welcoming and inclusive for people affected by dementia.



**Joan Michael (left) is Saltcoats’ Head Librarian, and she also happens to be Merle Wiley’s sister. Joan has introduced several environmental enhancements to the Saltcoats library branch to help create a more supportive and inclusive environment for library patrons.**

**Over the past year, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan was able to engage 28 organizations across 20 communities in rural Saskatchewan with our dementia friendly initiatives and resources.**

“We hosted a presentation by the Alzheimer Society because we might have some clients who are undiagnosed, and we wanted them to know the warning signs [of dementia]. The presentation and resources provided helped our staff feel more prepared for any future occurrences of dementia for our clients and their families.”

**- East Central Newcomers Welcome Centre, Yorkton, SK**

# Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan has been an active and supporting partner in the Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan project in Yorkton, Melville, and the surrounding rural communities since May 2021.

Our central goal throughout the project has been to reduce stigma and isolation that is experienced by people who are affected by dementia, by helping rural residents, businesses, organizations, and shared interest groups and clubs learn more about dementia and dementia friendly communities.

## Community Momentum in Kamsack

Andrea Verigin, a Kamsack resident and the Director of the Society for the Involvement of Good Neighbours, also known as SIGN, connected with the Alzheimer Society about leading a dementia friendly discussion in her community. Having a personal connection to dementia, Andrea felt it was important to help other families in the area by showing them their home community is interested in becoming more supportive to those affected by dementia.

Andrea and the SIGN Family Centre teamed up with Kamsack Public Library to organize and host a dementia friendly conversation in June, and, thanks to their local promotional efforts, representatives from a variety of local businesses and organizations, including the Mayor of Kamsack, attended the event, along with a couple with lived experience with dementia, who spoke about the importance of community inclusion.

## The City of Yorkton and the Gallagher Centre

The Gallagher Centre and City of Yorkton have worked with the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan and other collaborating organizations of the Dementia Supports in Rural Saskatchewan project on several dementia friendly initiatives, including a dementia friendly audit of eleven City of Yorkton facilities. The Gallagher Centre hosted our Dementia Community Coordinator for a Dementia Friendly presentation on World Alzheimer's Day for their staff from customer service, maintenance, and other departments, and they are displaying our dementia friendly tip sheets on their staff bulletin boards for easy reference.

Dale Brock, the new Facilities Manager of the Gallagher Centre, is currently working on implementing dementia friendly considerations that were identified in the City audit, which is his first big undertaking since starting in this role.



**Dementia Supports  
in Rural Saskatchewan**

The owners of Anytime Fitness Esterhazy arranged a meeting with our Dementia Community Coordinator to learn more about dementia friendly programming for recreation and leisure centres. The meeting inspired the owners to review the plans for their new Moosomin location (currently under construction) to incorporate dementia friendly considerations from a structural standpoint and arrange a walk-through of their Yorkton location.



Our Dementia Community Coordinator (middle) and First Link Coordinator (right) for Yorkton, Melville, and the surrounding rural areas facilitated a learning session at Caleb Village, an independent living community in Melville, SK. Brent Fraser, General Manager of Caleb Village (left), noted the importance of ongoing dementia education because their residents want to keep living in their homes as they age.

“When I first approached some businesses in the area about the Alzheimer Society’s dementia friendly initiatives, they did not think they served customers who have dementia. Because so much misunderstanding exists around dementia, lots of people I spoke with only thought about it in terms of the final stage where the person is living in long-term care. But, the majority of people living with dementia live in their homes and want to participate in community life.”

- Jackie Hofstrand, Dementia Community Coordinator

# Knowledge Changes Everything



**Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan First Link Coordinator, Heather Dash; Public Awareness Coordinator, Erica Zarazun; and, Curt Koethler, member of our lived experience group that consulted on our new provincial office signage.**

Meaningful engagement is a person-centred approach that encourages and invites people with dementia and their care partners to purposefully participate in the activities of organizations and communities with which they belong.

While renovating our provincial office this past spring, we consulted with a group of people with lived experience with dementia from our community to determine how to improve directional signage and way-finding aids for people who visit our space. Through this process with the working group, we also created a Dementia Friendly Office Guide to support other businesses and organizations to incorporate more dementia friendly considerations into their physical environments.



**Our former Chief Executive Officer, Joanne Bracken, pictured beside some of the new directional signage installed throughout our provincial office.**

**Labels added to our kitchen area to help guests locate supplies. Yellow and black were selected for all labels and signage as it provides high colour contrast, and research shows this colour combination lasts longer in the human eye.**



## Community Presentations

We host regular Community Conversations via Zoom on a variety of dementia friendly topics designed to stimulate reflection and action in attendees' home communities.

For example, in our discussion on dementia friendly libraries, panelists highlighted the importance of meaningfully engaging people with accessibility needs in your organization's the planning process and how collaborating with other community organizations can provide added support for making change and reaching goals.

Other Community Conversation topics we have facilitated include Reducing the Risk of Dementia Through Nutrition and Socialization and Dementia Friendly Communities Work Across Canada. Recording of these conversations, along with other previously recorded learning opportunities are available on our [YouTube channel](#).



**Pictured clockwise are the panelists who were featured in our Community Conversation with Libraries: Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan Public Awareness Coordinator, Erica Zarazun; Morgan Kelly and Meagan Dillen from Southeast Regional Library Headquarters; Joan Michael from Saltcoats Public Library; and, Patti-Lynne McLeod from Regina Public Libraries.**



We offer multiple different community presentations throughout the year, including our annual Understanding Dementia event in January and Healthier Brains presentation in March. These presentations are designed to increase public awareness of the warning signs, actions to reduce the risk of dementia, the differences between Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, and supports and services offered by the Alzheimer Society.

**Dr. Megan Surkan, a Geriatrician from Saskatoon and Assistant Professor Geriatric Medicine from the University of Saskatchewan was the guest presenter at this year's Understanding Dementia event.**

**To help support individual community members, business representatives, and organizational leaders in becoming more dementia friendly, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan has created numerous guides and checklists for specific sectors and environments, like libraries, pharmacies, and recreation centres.**

**To request a copy of a guide for your business or organization, please email: [friends@alzheimer.sk.ca](mailto:friends@alzheimer.sk.ca)**

# A Community of Support

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## 60% of people with dementia live in their community.

**When you choose the Alzheimer Society, you join a community of supporters and experts committed to helping each of us thrive.**

Our role as a Society is creating and fostering a community of support in the management of dementia in the lives of those living with the disease.

### Dementia Friends

A Dementia Friend learns more about dementia and what they can do to help make our province a more accessible and inclusive place for those affected by it.

By learning more and using this knowledge in their everyday interactions, Dementia Friends help reduce stigma and make our communities more supportive, accessible, and inclusive for people affected by dementia.



### Dementia Friendly Communities

Dementia friendly communities are welcoming to people with dementia, support them to live well, and engage them meaningfully in everyday life.

A dementia friendly community focuses on stigma reduction so that people living with dementia feel supported to participate and contribute in meaningful ways. Dementia friendly communities promote locally based supports and address barriers experienced by individuals living with dementia and their care partners.

### Community of Support

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's programs and services help people with dementia, their care partners, families, and friends by providing information, support, education, and referral to other community services.

**Call our Dementia Helpline at 1-877-949-4141  
or, email us [helpline@alzheimer.sk.ca](mailto:helpline@alzheimer.sk.ca).  
Our Dementia Helpline is available  
Monday to Friday – 8:30am - 4:30pm.**

[www.alzheimer.ca/sk](http://www.alzheimer.ca/sk)

1-800-263-3367