

“All I want is to be with you:” Kerri Thompson talks about the heartbreak of watching her mom live through Alzheimer’s COVID

January is Alzheimer’s Awareness Month

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE AURORA, ON (Jan. 11, 2021) – Four days after Kerri Thompson’s mom Joyce, who lives with Alzheimer’s disease, was out of lockdown at her retirement home, Kerri herself contracted COVID-19.

“For me it felt like a bad cold, but had me in bed for a couple of days. Mom was tested and she was negative, thankfully, but she is so isolated with me sick.”

Kerri is the “essential visitor” for her mom, which means she is able to go in to her mom’s retirement home and ensure her mom gets at least some human interaction. Kerri blames COVID and the resulted social isolation on her mom’s rapid cognitive decline.

“My mom’s world was narrowing with COVID and now it’s literally one room. Each day all she wants to do is what she always loved to do, which is go for a walk. That one small pleasure and sense of normalcy has been taken away. For her own health, she cannot leave her room and yet for her mental health, all this is just devastating. She is losing her strength and her confidence to walk.”

Kerri says she calls her mom all day long. Some days her mom answers, other days a ringing phone doesn’t mean anything to her.

“I see how she forgets people whom she has not seen in a while so I visited her every day, but now (because of Kerri’s own quarantine, which ended Jan. 8), I cannot even go to her window. A 14-day quarantine is an eternity in Alzheimer’s when changes happen in no predictable pattern. ‘All I want is to be with you,’ she tells me. I fear my heart will break.”

Kerri said up until COVID, her mom was attended the Alzheimer Society of York Region’s D.A.Y. program six days a week, which provided her the social interaction she needed and loved. “She had busy days, doing things, useful things that makes a person feel vital.”

But with COVID, she no longer goes to the D.A.Y. program and she stays in her room.

“Sitting alone in her room has taken away the joy. She knows enough about what she is missing to say ‘Kerri, sometimes I just want to scream.’ I get you, mom, and go ahead and I will scream with you. Please, we need the vaccine faster so mom can go to the Alzheimer Society of York Region D.A.Y. program and fight to keep what abilities she has.”

January is Alzheimer’s Awareness Month and time to raise awareness and support of the more than 17,000 York Region residents who currently live with Alzheimer’s disease

and other dementias. The Alzheimer Society of York Region provides programs and services to people on the dementia journey including in-person and virtual D.A.Y. programs, social worker support including counselling and support groups, public education and healthcare navigation.

-30-

Media contact:

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

Interview opportunity: Kerri Thompson, who lives in Aurora, is available to be interviewed. Kerri does not know where or how she contracted COVID-19. Contact Lisa Day, communications and fund development coordinator, at lday@alzheimer-york.com to set up interviews.

Kerri Thompson story. Feel free to use whatever you would like from this story:
<https://alzheimer.ca/york/en/whats-happening/news/covid-19-social-isolation-dementia>

Alzheimer's Awareness Month events: <https://alzheimer.ca/york/en/whats-happening/january-alzheimers-awareness-month>

Photo: Photos courtesy of Kerri Thompson