

Connections

Linking a community of dementia support



Preparing for change and transition

The telltale crispness in the morning is a sure sign that the dog days of summer are coming to a close. As September begins, many families focus on returning back to school and work. Some people relish the structure and routine that come at this time of year. Others may set goals or write to-do lists. This is a period of transition.

Families and others on the dementia journey may feel this, too. Perhaps they've noticed changing abilities or behaviours, but have decided to wait to address these until after the BBQs, picnics, and days at the beach are over. Perhaps they've had conversations on family road trips or at family reunions that they intend to follow up on in the fall.

And perhaps they've realized they can no longer wait to take action.

Whatever the reason, autumn is a great time to commit to change and to connect or reconnect with people who can provide information and support.

Find help near you

To learn more about the education and events happening near you, visit the [Regional Resource Centres](#) page of our website or call the First Link® Dementia Helpline at 1-800-936-6033.

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Change is the only constant

Welcome to the fall issue of *Connections*, the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s publication for people around the province who are affected by or concerned about dementia. Against the backdrop of the changing seasons, this issue is all about transitions.

This issue has tips for caregivers on handling some key transitions, including changing roles within families and the transition to residential care. Read about a couple who transitioned to residential care, about a concert organizer who was moved to fundraise for the Society in his own unique way, and about another couple whose commitment and dedication to our work has been exemplary.

September is also World Alzheimer's Month, and on September 21 we will celebrate World Alzheimer's Day. Organizations around the world will be raising awareness and challenging the stigma that surrounds

dementia. We are a part of this movement – and you are too. Together, we are committed to a future without Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Until this day comes, we are building a dementia-friendly society, where people living with dementia, their families and caregivers are acknowledged and included.

"Change is the only constant."
– Heraclitus
(Greek philosopher)

As always, thank you for your courage, your commitment and your support of our work.



Maria Howard MBA, CCRC
Chief Executive Officer
Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Events at a glance

We host signature events throughout the year to raise awareness and funds to help provide programs and services in communities around B.C. Here's a taste.

Anything for Alzheimer's
Year-round



Breakfast to Remember
February/March



Investors Group Walk for Alzheimer's
May



Scotiabank Vancouver Half-Marathon & 5k
June



Climb for Alzheimer's
September



Coffee Break®
September/October



Learn more or get involved

For more information about all of our events, visit the [fundraising events page](#) on our website.

At peace in a home away from home



Kate Clifford, whose husband is living with dementia, shares how they experienced his transition into long-term care.

Kate and Henry at one of their favourite hiking areas, Bryce Canyon in Utah.

The dreaded day arrived. It was time for my beloved Henry to move to residential care. It was hard to believe dementia was carrying him away from me.

Henry was diagnosed in 2011. My son and I cared for him at home for almost five years. The turning point was a fall. Luckily nothing was broken, but his pain and inability to get out of bed let me know it was time to begin to research a transition into residential care, something I could never have envisioned.

With his mobility limited, Henry now missed socializing at the day centre and other programs we attended together. I witnessed his spirit declining. This was heartbreaking. Even more saddening was the realization that our close and loving life together was going to change.

We talked about the transition in detail. He was willing to move. He understood that he needed more care than my son and I could provide. Henry's gift to me was his total acceptance of the dementia, always patient and never complaining. My fears of falling out of love with him due to his "new identity" never materialized. Quite the opposite: our love deepened.

I was fortunate that my first choice of residence became available four days after contacting our case manager. Through my tears I accepted.

Henry quickly adapted to his new community where there are wonderful staff, three friendly roommates, and plenty of activities and fun. Best of all, he's regained his spirit. I can see the many positive outcomes of our decision and my life feels more relaxed.

His home has become my second home. I look so forward to seeing him three times a week, and engaging with the staff and residents. I've created activities we enjoy together, like exercises, mind games and lots of singing. Seeing his face light up on my arrival brings me such joy.

So far, during his first year away, I've had no complaints about his care. We're both at peace in his home away from home. I feel blessed and have much gratitude as Henry and I journey on.

Connect with support and learning

First Link® dementia support can help with some of the challenges families face when considering residential care options for the person living with dementia. To learn more, contact your [local Alzheimer Resource Centre](#) or call the First Link® Dementia Helpline at 1-800-936-6033.

Tips to help cope with change

Dementia can be life altering. Following a diagnosis, many people will experience changes in many aspects of life. Anticipating the changes and learning how to cope with the emotional and practical implications of these shifts can be vital to maintaining health and well-being. Here are some tips to help cope with some of the big changes dementia can bring.

Shifting roles among family

Only one person receives a dementia diagnosis, but the whole family will be deeply affected by it. As it progresses, the changes dementia brings can provoke or amplify tensions within a family, especially when people cope differently with caregiving responsibilities. Here are some suggestions for working together:

- **Have a family meeting.** Talking about feelings, caregiving responsibilities and potential problems may ease tensions. Asking a professional counsellor or moderator to facilitate a meeting can help keep things on track. If possible, ensure the person living with dementia attends the meeting and is included in the conversation.
- **Recognize differences.** Every family member may respond differently to changing responsibilities. For example, some may be hands-on caregivers who immediately respond to the task at hand. Others may be more comfortable helping by taking on specific tasks, like paying the bills. Identify and take advantage of each person's strengths.
- **Learn together.** Register for a dementia education workshop and attend with other family members. If you are unable to attend in person, the Society offers free monthly one-hour tele-workshops which can be attended

from the comfort of home. Family members from anywhere in the world can participate and receive the same information.



Siblings may need to work together to coordinate caregiving responsibilities.

Requiring in-home support

It is normal to want to live at home for as long as possible. This can become more challenging as symptoms of dementia progress. There may come a point where it's necessary to access in-home support services. Here are some tips to help both the caregiver and the person living with dementia cope with this change:

- **Start early.** Use regular in-home support as early as possible so that everyone can get used to having a care provider present.
- **Introductions.** Introduce the care provider to the person living with dementia before support begins so they are not a stranger. You may need to do this each time, especially if there isn't a consistent care provider.

- **Put the focus on you.** A person living with dementia may be more willing to accept in-home help if it's presented as being for the caregiver or another family member. For example: "I need some help with the housework as my back has been sore lately."
- **Provide reassurance.** It could take time before the person living with dementia feels comfortable with the situation. Listen to how they are feeling about these changes. Try to understand the fear and vulnerability associated with this transition and reassure the person if they are upset.



Start using regular in-home support as early as possible so that everyone can get used to it.

Transitioning to residential care

Deciding that it's time for a person to transition to residential care may be one of the most difficult decisions a caregiver will ever have to make. Caregivers shouldn't consider a move as a failure or selfishness. Most people living with dementia will experience this transition at some point during the progression of the disease. Here are some things that may help you cope with this significant change:

- **Accept your feelings.** As you consider a move, you may experience a broad range of emotions like guilt, loss, sadness, denial and anger. You may also feel relieved that you now share the responsibility for providing care with others. These are all normal reactions.

- **Be inclusive.** If possible, include the person living with dementia in the decision-making process. Be sure to acknowledge their feelings, questions and concerns.
- **Learn as much as you can.** We have resources that cover various topics related to residential care, including: "Considering the move to a long-term care home," "Preparing for a move," "Handling moving day," and "Adjusting after a move." To download the series, visit alzbc.org/residential_care. To receive a printed copy, call the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s **First Link® Dementia Helpline** or your **local Resource Centre**.
- **Seek support.** If you're considering or in the process of transitioning a person living with dementia to residential care, contact family, friends, health-care providers, other caregivers or the Alzheimer Society of B.C. for support. Our caregiver support groups are one way to get connected with others who are caring for someone living with dementia. The Society also offers an in-person educational workshop called "Transition to Residential Care."

"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." – Victor Frankl

Connect with support and learning

First Link® dementia support is for people living with dementia and their care partners at any stage of the journey. To learn more about any of the resources referred to above, visit the We Can Help section of our website, contact your **local Resource Centre** or call the **First Link® Dementia Helpline** at 1-800-936-6033.

Make your coffee count!

The 22nd annual Alzheimer Coffee Break® kicks off on Thursday, September 21, 2017 and continues for a month thereafter. When you host a Coffee Break® in your community, you help raise funds for local programs and services for the estimated 70,000 British Columbians with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias as well as their caregivers.

Do you want to make your Coffee Break® a success? Here's how:



Recipe for a great Coffee Break®

Ingredients:

- 1 enthusiastic host
- 1 cup of kindness
- 2 cups of a supportive community of family, friends or work colleagues
- 2 tablespoons of creativity
- A dollop of fun

Instructions:

1. Assemble the host and supportive community.
2. Stir together creativity and kindness.
3. Brew until increased awareness about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias fills the room.
4. Serve until each cup has reached its full fundraising potential.
5. Top with a dollop of fun and laughter.

Helpful tips for serving:

- Coffee Breaks can be held anywhere: offices, schools, retirement homes, businesses, community centres or in your living room – wherever coffee can be served and a donation collected!
- Let your friends, family and neighbours know why you are hosting a Coffee Break or who you are hosting it for.
- In addition to coffee, you can also offer tea and juice, and add cookies or pastries to sell along with your coffee.

Provincial presenting sponsor

HEALTH - AND - TECHNOLOGY
DISTRICT

Host an event
or find out more

Get together with friends and make your coffee count! Call 1-800-667-3742 or visit www.coffeebreakbc.ca to learn how you can host an event or to find a Coffee Break® in your area.

Concert organizer creates awareness



Music can be a powerful source of joy and comfort for people living with dementia and for their family and friends. Below, read how – and why – Steven Yue turned the power of music into fundraisers to support the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Steven Yue (right) receives a thank you plaque at his charity concert.

A long time ago, while teaching a computer skills course, I met a student who inspired me to support the Alzheimer Society of B.C. After becoming fast friends, the student and I would enjoy regular dinners together. One evening, I noticed that he was starting to repeat stories about his past. I soon learned from his wife that he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

I introduced him and his family to the staff at the Society's Chinese Resource Centre in Vancouver. This gave me the chance to learn more from the staff and volunteers about how the disease affects people. I also had friends whose parents were living with the disease and I knew I really wanted to do more to help.

Providing services and supports for people living with dementia, many of whom are seniors, is incredibly important. I wanted to do all that I could to ensure that more services are available for them. That's why I began fundraising through my Charity Concerts for Alzheimer's eight years ago. Every year I do my best to try to raise more money. Next year, I plan to continue to invite artists from Hong Kong and other places around the world to perform with me and help raise awareness about the disease.

I urge others in the Chinese community to get involved and organize more fundraising events to

raise money for Alzheimer's disease.

Steven held his latest charity concert in June raising over \$5,000. In total he has raised more than \$23,000 for the Alzheimer Society of B.C. You too can make a difference in your community and in the lives of people affected by dementia.

Snapshot: Anything for Alzheimer's

- Last year there were 96 *Anything for Alzheimer's* fundraising events. Of those, 8 were performances.
- Other events included awareness, corporate, sales, sports, art, family and Christmas fundraising events.
- Together we raised nearly \$500,000 including funds from an event featuring Maria Shriver as our keynote speaker.

Do your thing!

Visit anythingforalzheimers.com to see what other fundraisers are doing or to register your event. To learn more about how we can help support your fundraising goals, contact us at 1-800-667-3742 or info@alzheimerbc.org.



Remembering Barry Ritter

Barry Ritter was a volunteer who changed the way that people who met him saw Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.



Diagnosed in 2012, Barry lived with Alzheimer's disease until his death this past spring. He talked openly about his experiences and helped those around him better understand dementia.

Barry and his wife Myrna contacted the Society several months after his diagnosis. They met Sara Wagner, who was leading *Shaping the Journey: living with dementia*[®], the education series that Barry took part in. As he grew more comfortable with his diagnosis, Barry realized he wanted to volunteer.

Barry started co-facilitating the series with Sara. He shared his experience with different medications, and spoke about deciding to stop driving early in the journey.

Barry and Myrna presented at conferences for health-care providers, students and at the Legislature, sharing their own experience living with dementia and as a caregiver. They were a team. "People told me that Barry's presentations were the best part," says Sara. "His story was hard for some to hear, but it changed the way people saw the disease. They saw you can live with dementia and stay active and engaged."

The honouree family for the 2015 Vancouver *Investors Group Walk for Alzheimer's*, Barry and Myrna shared their story to help raise awareness and funds. Barry showed us the incredible impact people living with the disease can have in their community. He was more than a volunteer: he was a role model.

Read and learn more

Please visit the [Volunteer section](#) of our website to learn more about volunteering with the Society or call 1-800-667-3742.

About Connections

Connections is a quarterly print and digital publication produced by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. Articles cannot be reproduced without written permission.

Contact us to contribute content or to subscribe to receive *Connections* regularly.

- **Online** at alzbc.org/connections-newsletter
- **Email** newsletter@alzheimerbc.org
- **Call** 604-681-6530; 1-800-667-3742 (toll-free)
- **Mail** to the Alzheimer Society of B.C.
300-828 West 8th Ave.,
Vancouver, B.C., V5Z 1E2

You can help us reduce our costs by choosing to receive *Connections* by email.

Are you a person with dementia?

We also publish *Insight*, a publication for people living with dementia or cognitive impairment. For more information, visit alzbc.org/insight-bulletin.

Need additional support?

The First Link[®] Dementia Helpline is a confidential province-wide support and information service for anyone with questions about dementia, including people living with dementia, their caregivers, friends, family, professionals and the general public.

Email: supportline@alzheimerbc.org

Phone: 604-681-8651; 1-800-936-6033 (toll-free)
Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.