

Connections

Linking a community of dementia support



Living well and reducing our risk

Whether we have dementia, are caring for someone who does, or are trying to reduce our own risk, we can all make lifestyle choices to improve quality of life and – hopefully – sustain our long-term health.

By committing to living well through healthy eating, stress management, protecting our heads and increasing our physical and mental activity, we reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias. If you are a person living with dementia, these lifestyle habits may help slow the progression of the disease and improve your capacity to cope with the changes you are experiencing.

Living well might start as simply as going for a walk, taking a nap, staying connected with others or asking for help. “Living well” is going to look different for everyone. It’s never too soon or too late to make positive lifestyle changes that will maintain or improve brain and overall health.

Be good to your brain!

Please visit the [Brain Health](#) section of our website or call the First Link® Dementia Helpline at 1-800-936-6033 to learn more.

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Communities of courage

Welcome to the summer issue of *Connections*, the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s publication for people around the province who are affected by, or concerned about, dementia. This issue focuses on the importance of living well and caring for ourselves.

Read on for reflections on the importance of self-care for caregivers, as well as stories celebrating those who walked in the *Investors Group Walk for Alzheimer's*, our biggest fundraiser – or those who otherwise ran, fundraised and volunteered their time in support of our work. I attended this year's *Walk* in Victoria in honour of my mom, but across B.C. people gathered in their communities to walk, raise awareness and honour people with dementia and their caregivers.

Our vision is of a world without Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Until this vision can be realized, we are committed to building a dementia-friendly

society. We create a dementia-friendly society when we amplify the voices and experiences of people living with dementia and those who care for them. We create a dementia-friendly society when we raise awareness and help to build healthier communities that encourage support and reduce risk.

I hope this issue inspires you to reflect on how you can live well and encourage those in your community to do so too. As always, thank you for your courage, your commitment to this movement, 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

Prioritizing self-care and asking for help



Tara Hildebrand has worked as a Support and Education Coordinator with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. for seven years. She is passionate about helping to improve the quality of life of caregivers, families and people with dementia – including reminding caregivers to ask for help.

“It feels like I’m losing control.” “I don’t want to impose.” “I feel like I should be able to do it by myself.” These are just a few of the comments I’ve heard from caregivers when discussing the possibility of getting help from others. Supporting a person with Alzheimer’s disease or another dementia is a challenging responsibility that can take a toll on the physical and emotional health of a caregiver. Yet, for many reasons, caregivers often set their own needs aside.

Self-care is one of the most important aspects of caregiving, but for most caregivers it feels completely backwards to put themselves first. Although it may be difficult for caregivers to prioritize their own needs, it is important to think about their own well-being in order to be the best caregivers they can be. One thing that comes up frequently in my conversations with caregivers is the huge expectations they have for themselves. People often think they should be able to care for the person with dementia on their own. It can be hard to ask for and accept help. But asking for help is not a sign of weakness. The reality is that asking for help shows

a lot of courage. Whether it is physical help or the emotional support that comes from sharing thoughts and feelings with others, getting additional support can be a huge relief.

Here at the Society, we empower and educate caregivers, reminding them about the importance of being as compassionate towards themselves as they are towards the person they are caring for. I always tell caregivers, “A person with dementia is doing the best they can with what they have – and so are you as a caregiver. Be kind and gentle with yourself.” I think this gives people permission to say, “I can’t do more on my own. I do need help” – and that permission is an integral part of self-care.

Connect with support and learning

First Link® dementia support is for people with dementia and their care partners at any stage of the journey. Call the First Link® Dementia Helpline at 1-800-936-6033 or visit the [We Can Help](#) section of our website.

What can you do?

Here are some things you can do to help maintain your health and well-being. These quotes have been submitted by caregivers.



Set realistic expectations for yourself.

“I’m balancing my responsibilities (and priorities) of being a partner, a dad, a son and a grandfather.”



Learn about the disease.

“I’m learning about the disease so I understand what’s happening.”



Seek additional information and support as needed. Consider joining a caregiver support group.

“If I look after myself, I will have more to give.”



Take one day at a time – enjoy something about each day.

“I’m laughing with my parents at every opportunity.”

Poetry: “Running on empty”

This poem was written by Chris Charles, a caregiver. Gina, his wife of 43 years, passed away earlier this year. Chris, Gina, and Gina’s caregiver, Raquel, were this year’s Investors Group Walk for Alzheimer’s honourees for the North Shore.

There are mornings when I lie awake, staring at the wall,
Delaying the dreaded moment when I start the endless chores

There are days when I crawl from bed and stumble ‘cross the floor
Thinking, “How much longer, Lord? Lord, how much more?”

There are times when the drudgery, seems to never end,
And the sense of loss.....quite simply overwhelms.

There are moments when I catch myself, gazing out to sea,
Seeing but not seeing and wishing I were free.

But I’ll be free too soon I fear and lost in loneliness,
No, thoughts like this are just a sign I’m almost out of gas.

Running on empty, I need to take a break,
To rest, relax, recuperate, “time out” for both our sakes.



2017 Investors Group Walk for Alzheimer’s North Shore Honouree, Chris Charles

Society profiled internationally

This year's Alzheimer Disease International conference was held in Kyoto, Japan. Maria Howard, our Chief Executive Officer, was a keynote speaker. She talked about the Society's work to grow dementia-friendly communities, which was the conference theme. There were over 32 countries represented with 3,500 delegates attending.

Maria says, "While there is certainly much work to be done still, it is reassuring that a global movement is building. We play a role in this movement – and our work is making a difference."

At right: Maria Howard on stage at the conference



Celebrate

Thank you for walking with us!

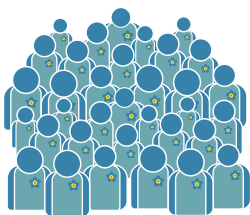
Special thanks to our title sponsor, Investors Group, as well as our provincial sponsors: CKNW, Cowell Auto Group, Fairchild TV, Global BC, Immediate Images, Retirement Concepts, Summerland Health Auxiliary and the *Vancouver Sun*.



Over \$720,000 raised to date



Walks in 22 communities across B.C.



More than 5,000 Walk participants



630 volunteers



43 Walk in a Box locations

Running 42.2 km to support the Society – and her dad

During Vancouver’s record-breaking year of snowfall, Lauren Kratzer trained outdoors for her first-ever marathon, which she ran in May. Below, in her own words, is why she ran.

This year I tackled a personal bucket list goal: to train for and complete a marathon, 42.2 whole kilometres. This sounds daunting, but the challenge pales in comparison to the immense challenge of tackling Alzheimer’s disease and the struggles one has to face every day. The marathon was about much more than my bucket list because I was raising money in support of the Alzheimer Society of B.C., and one very special individual in particular, my father.

My dad, Peter, has been living with a rare form of Alzheimer’s disease for over five years. Witnessing this disease in action has been a humbling, inspiring, frustrating and deeply saddening experience. Throughout the challenges this disease brings, Dad has maintained an amazingly positive attitude and compassion for others, always making a joke and ready for the next big-picture conversation.

Dad has always been my relentless supporter, spending countless cold evenings at the barn, coaching my softball teams, travelling to volleyball games all over the province, being the loudest one clapping at my graduations and the happiest man at the finish line for my half-marathons. He finds the “cruel” distances I run hilarious and has always loved hearing about my training. He has always supported me, and this time I ran to support him.

It was a wild, challenging, emotional and fantastic day. My Dad was indeed very proud. The race was amazing but the fundraising was by far the most

enjoyable and fulfilling part. It meant the world to my dad to feel so supported in such a tough time, and this is a cause I will continue to support.

Lauren pursued her own interest, and surpassed her Anything for Alzheimer’s fundraising goal, raising almost \$14,000 for the Society. There are so many ways to incorporate healthy physical activity with fundraising through Anything for Alzheimer’s. Last year, out of nearly 100 third-party fundraising events hosted for the Alzheimer Society of B.C., 32 of them were related to sports and fitness in some way. Events included seven runs, an ultramarathon, two walks, six golf tournaments, four hikes, a hockey tournament, a tennis rally, two dance events and two fitness classes.



Lauren with her dad and mom on race day

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@alzheimercbc.org.

Socialize, hike or stroll for a good cause

Coffee Break® and Climb for Alzheimer's are coming up this September and are two great ways to stay physically and socially active while supporting the Society.



Coffee Break®

Turn one of your regular coffee breaks into a special one in support of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. as part of the Alzheimer Coffee Break®, a nationwide campaign to raise awareness and funds for people affected by Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

Lori Gregory, the Sechelt Minds in Motion® group and the team at the Sechelt Seniors Activity Centre have participated for the past two years. They spread the word throughout the Sunshine Coast and have many delicious homemade goodies to sell and enjoy on the day. They are excited for another fun-filled event this September.

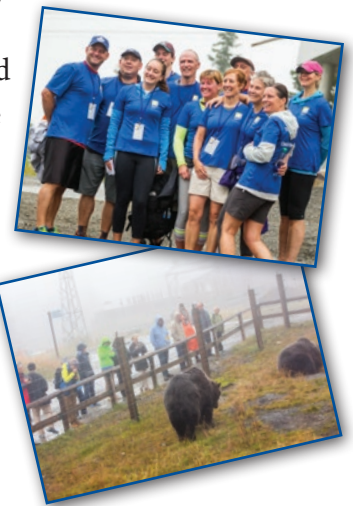
Last year, Audrey, a retired recreation and wellness consultant who lives in Nanaimo, B.C., hosted her first Coffee Break® as a tribute to her mom who passed away in 2015. "I was thrilled with the donation amount from my fundraiser. I plan to do this annually as an ongoing memorial for my mom and for all the moms and families that have been affected by Alzheimer's disease."

Climb for Alzheimer's

For thousands of families, dementia is an uphill journey. It takes courage to make it up a mountain. The *Climb for Alzheimer's* is a fun, invigorating hike in support of the Society.

Participants make the journey up the mountain in teams, like this family team (pictured at right) whose members came from as far as Ontario to climb for their father. Hike the Grouse Grind® while you ensure that we can support, educate and advocate for people with dementia and their families, as well as enable research that will advance our knowledge of the disease.

The family-friendly Summit Stroll is a great option for people who want to participate in the *Climb for Alzheimer's* without doing the Grouse Grind®. Participants can take in the sights and activities at the peak of Grouse Mountain, including the bear habitat, the Theatre in the Sky, or the walking paths and exhibits.



**Learn more
or participate:**

For more information about Coffee Break® or *Climb for Alzheimer's*, visit coffeebreakbc.ca or climbforalzheimers.ca – or call 1-800-667-3742.

Meet Jane Lewchuk

A volunteer who goes above and beyond for Minds in Motion®

After being unexpectedly laid off from a job she'd been at for 15 years, Jane Lewchuk decided to follow her parents' example of investing free time in volunteerism. When Jane came across a posting for a volunteer for the Society's Minds in Motion® program in Nanaimo, she decided this was the meaningful role she'd been looking for. Jane's mother, who lives in Alberta, was diagnosed with dementia ten years ago, and Jane's best friend was also a caregiver for her own mother.

Minds in Motion® is a fitness and social program for people experiencing early symptoms of Alzheimer's disease or another dementia and a friend, family member or care partner. Volunteers help ensure everyone is included, enjoying themselves and able to participate in activities and socializing.



Volunteer Jane Lewchuk (left) and Minds in Motion® Coordinator Shanan St. Loius

For Jane, the relationships she builds with participants keeps her coming back. "Minds in Motion® is a wonderful program. I watch pairs come in together, and at first they keep to themselves. The fitness part warms people up – even something simple like dropping a medicine ball and watching it roll across the room gets us laughing. There is a sense of camaraderie from sharing the fitness tasks, and that makes it easy to start connecting over cookies and coffee," she says.

Jane just passed her one year anniversary as a volunteer at the Alzheimer Society of B.C. "The thing I'd like to tell other people thinking of volunteering with the Minds in Motion® program is that you have nothing to lose. It's fun. It's rewarding. I love it and look forward to it every week."

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.

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- **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.