

Looking forward to spring

Along with blooming flowers and April showers, the start of the spring season brings with it a new edition of the *Insight* bulletin. This issue discusses living well with dementia and the importance of social connections along the dementia journey. We also share an update on the great work of the Society's Dementia-Friendly Communities B.C. Leadership Group. Finally, the artwork of a person living with dementia is featured in 'Creative corner'.



People with dementia share their perspectives

Spring is a season we can look forward to, with flowers in bloom, warmer weather and longer days. Recently, groups of people living with dementia around the province discussed the topic of spring. Their comments and perspectives are shared below.

What do you enjoy most about the spring season?

- “Birds, trees and not having dark winter nights.”
- “The fresh start after a long winter.”
- “The warmer, more pleasant weather.”
- “The ongoing statement of life.”
- “Longer and brighter days.”
- “Flowers in my garden.”

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- “Sunny days!”
- “I feel joyful in the spring air.”
- “The renewal of the earth with the new growing season.”
- “Nesting birds, and walking along shores and gardens and taking photos.”
- “The daffodils.”

Living well with dementia

There are many myths about dementia that have emerged over the years. These myths can add to the stigma or shame attached to the disease. A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another dementia can unfortunately bring some people to think their life will lose purpose. This is one myth the Alzheimer Society of B.C. is working to dispel for the more than 70,000 people in B.C. who are currently living with dementia, their family and friends, and the general public.

The reality is that is possible to live well with

- “My wife’s birthday.”
- “Thinking about the garden and anticipating getting together with old friends and distant family.”
- “It’s much nicer to bike and walk with my dog.”
- “More time outdoors, and losing a little weight.”
- “The small flowers are showing up.”
- “Spring skiing!”
- “Sticking to my New Year’s resolutions.”
- “The summer won’t be far away!”
- “Baseball.”
- “The beautiful blossoms and flowers.”



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dementia. Many people living with the disease can remain engaged and active and are still able to have meaningful relationships. They can continue to participate in life and contribute to their communities – in their own way, even as the disease progresses.

“The assumption often made is that as soon as a person is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease they immediately become incapable and incompetent. It is one of the myths I attempt to shatter,” shares Alzheimer's Advocate Jim Mann who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2007. “We *can* live positively and well after diagnosis. I have a voice – a legitimate voice – through which I can participate in life's daily routines and in the community. We're not all victims. We *have* a life worth living. It may not be the life we would choose, but it's still a life.”

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is here to help people continue to live well while on the dementia journey. If you are living with the disease, consider contacting the Society if you have not already done so. The Alzheimer Society



Above, Alzheimer's Advocate Jim Mann presents at the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s *Breakfast to Remember* fundraising event in February.

of B.C.'s First Link[®] program can connect you and your family to a community of learning, services and support. To learn more about First Link visit our website at alzbc.org or call the First Link Dementia Helpline toll-free at: 1-800-936-6033.

Establishing and maintaining connections with family, friends and community support services like the Alzheimer Society of B.C. can help you cope with the challenges of the disease and enhance your quality of life. Read more about the importance of 'Staying connected' on page 4.

Upcoming Tele-Workshop

April 21, 1 p.m. PST

Research Update: Join Dr. Haakon Nygaard from the University of British Columbia's Centre for Brain Health as he explores the question "Is there light at the end of the tunnel?" This session will review some of the exciting scientific progress being made in Alzheimer's disease research and its potential future clinical directions.

To view recordings of past tele-workshops or to learn about upcoming sessions visit alzbc.org/tele-workshops or call 604-681-6530 (toll-free: 1-800-667-3742).

Staying connected

A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another dementia can lead some people to feel isolated and lonely. It is important to remember that social engagement plays a significant role in our overall health and well-being.

Staying active and involved with life may help reduce stress, boost mood and keep relationships strong. Being socially engaged may also improve your quality of life and your capacity to cope with the changes you experience along the dementia journey.



Below we share a few suggestions for how you can stay socially connected.

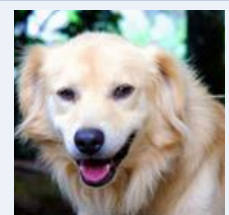
Continue with your hobbies and interests: The things that were important and meaningful for you throughout your life will always be important and meaningful. If you enjoyed cooking, gardening or sports, continue to find ways to incorporate these interests into your life. Don't be reluctant to ask for help if you need to adjust to your changing abilities. For example, if you love to bake, consider asking a family member or friend to join you if you're finding it more challenging to follow a recipe.

Maintain old friendships and make new ones: Finding opportunities to interact with the people around you will help you stay engaged. Talking to someone you trust about your feelings, worries or to simply share a good laugh can provide the support and encouragement you need. If you are in the early stages of the disease, consider connecting with other people living with dementia through one of the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s early stage support groups. Call the First Link® Dementia Helpline at 1-800-936-6033 to find a support group near you.

Be open to new experiences: Consider exploring new ways to engage socially. Volunteering activities, for example, can be a great way to stay connected with your local community. It's important to take your abilities, health and interests into consideration when choosing new activities. Have a discussion with your family or health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

Contribute to Insight!

An upcoming issue of *Insight* will feature the joy of pets and animals. Do you currently own a pet? Did you have a favourite pet as a child? Share your favourite pet story or memory with *Insight*. Photos are welcome! See page 8 for how to contact *Insight*.



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Suggestions from people with dementia

Recently, people living with dementia shared the ways they stay socially active and connected with their friends, family and local community.

Connecting with friends:

- “I go out with friends for lunch, sometimes just one-on-one.”
- “I go to art classes with friends.”
- “By joining other men for a morning coffee hour at the church.”
- “I go to the pub with friends; I have been going for years.”
- “My laughter yoga group has become good friends with each other, we rely on our get-togethers to have a good laugh and feel better.”
- “We keep in touch with old friends; we all like to hear from each other.”
- “I stay connected because I am proactive about being connected.”

Connecting with family:

- “I watch the grandkids play hockey.”
- “By taking the grandkids to school and picking them up after.”
- “I live with family and we have dinner together often.”
- “By speaking with my children and grandchildren on the telephone.”
- “By asking loved ones to help drive and call.”



Connecting with the community:

- “I reached out to my neighbours who live in my apartment building. I think it’s important not to be afraid to start conversations in the elevator!”
- “By attending the Alzheimer Society of B.C.’s Minds in Motion program.”
- “I go to the seniors’ centre Keeping Connected program.”
- “I have a lot of social events with my church.”

The Dementia-Friendly Communities B.C. Leadership Group: One year later

Dementia-friendly communities help people with dementia feel included and supported in the places they work, live and play. The idea began in Japan as a way to support the increasing number of people living with dementia as a result of an aging population. From there, it spread to the United Kingdom, and ultimately, inspired the Alzheimer Society of B.C. to launch the Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative in our province.

The B.C. Leadership Group of People Living with Dementia was formed in February 2015 to ensure that the voices of people with dementia were at the forefront of the initiative. Their experiences and expertise informs and guides the provincial Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative.

In a previous edition of *Insight* we highlighted the B.C. Leadership Group for the first time. Below, we share a few updates on the Group's work.

Over the past year the Leadership Group has:

- Guided the priorities for the Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative.
- Informed all of the major print resources related to the initiative.
- Spoken about their experiences to a variety of audiences in different ways.

Kent Jacobsen is a member of the Leadership Group. Kent decided to become involved because of his interest in increasing awareness about dementia, particularly reducing the stigma associated with the disease. "People don't realize what dementia is and who it affects," shares Kent. "You can live quite a normal life as long as you have people to help you." Kent has enjoyed being a part of the Leadership Group and is looking forward to the positive change the initiative will bring to communities around the province.



Kent Jacobsen, member of the B.C. Leadership Group.

Join the B.C. Leadership Group!

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is looking to have more people join the Dementia-Friendly Communities B.C. Leadership Group. If you are a person living with dementia in B.C. who is interested in learning more about the Leadership Group email dementiafriendlybc@alzheimerbc.org or call toll-free at 1-800-667-3742.

Creative corner

A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another dementia can generate thoughts and feelings you have not experienced before. Creative corner gives readers of *Insight* the opportunity to share their creative work which can serve as an outlet to express a diverse range of thoughts and emotions. Consider whether partaking in creative hobbies, such as journaling, poetry, photography or painting could be helpful to you.

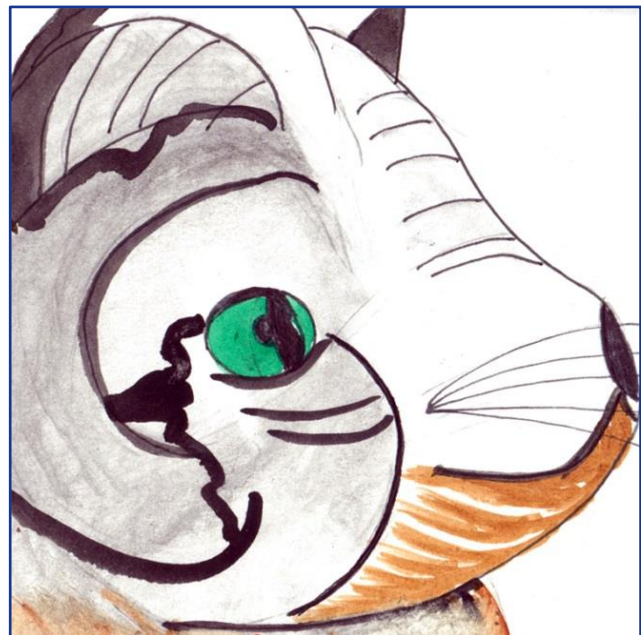
Bill's Art

Bill and Jocelyn's journey living with Alzheimer's disease began in 2003, when Bill, at the age of 55, was diagnosed with cognitive impairment. Two years later, the diagnosis was changed to Alzheimer's disease. Today, Bill lives at home and he enjoys various activities, such as walking, swimming, going to concerts and attending the Campbell River Adult Care Society program.

Bill only started to become involved in art after his retirement from work at the age of 55, showing that it is never too late to start a new hobby! For a few years he found an outlet for his creative side carving folk figures. Although Bill eventually lost the ability to see in 3D, he continued to enjoy colour and form. In 2014, Jocelyn signed Bill up for a beginner's watercolour class at the Campbell River Art Gallery, which he loved. The art pieces below were produced by Bill during this art class. They were submitted on behalf of Bill by his wife Jocelyn.



'Bird on a branch' – by Bill



'Cat's eye' – by Bill

Thank you to Bill and Jocelyn for sharing Bill's artwork. See page 8 for details on how you can submit your own art to be included in *Insight*.

Contribute to Insight

Do you have a topic you would like to see covered in *Insight*? Do you have content you would like to publish in *Insight* such as personal stories, photography or original poems?

If so, please contact the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

- **Email** Insight@alzheimerbc.org
- **Send mail** to the address below, care of *Insight*.
 300 - 828 West 8th Avenue
 Vancouver, BC V5Z 1E2

All submissions will be considered based on theme and space. Please provide your name, mailing address, phone number and/or email address if you would like to be contacted.

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- Visit our **website** at alzbc.org/Insight-bulletin
- **Call** 604-681-6530 or toll-free at 1-800-667-3742
- **Email** Insight@alzheimerbc.org

Call the First Link® Dementia Helpline

A confidential province-wide support and information service for anyone with questions about dementia, including people with dementia, their caregivers, family and friends, professionals and the general public.

- **1-800-936-6033**
 Lower Mainland 604-681-8651
 Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Email** supportline@alzheimerbc.org

Are you a caregiver?

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. also publishes *In Touch*, a bulletin for caregivers of persons with memory loss.

To subscribe:

- Visit our **website** at alzbc.org/In-Touch-bulletin
- **Call** 604-681-6530 or toll-free at 1-800-667-3742
- **Email** In-Touch@alzheimerbc.org



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