This page was exported from - The Auroran
Export date: Fri Mar 29 2:16:36 2024 / +0000 GMT

Raising a cup of coffee can raise awareness of Alzheimer?s



By Brock Weir

Chances are you do it just about every day, but with a little careful tweaking, your daily coffee breaks can go a lot further than giving you a much needed jolt of caffeine ? they can also raise awareness of a fast-growing problem.

Can a cup of coffee really make a difference for people with Alzheimer's disease? The Alzheimer Society of York Region certainly hopes so, and 20 years' experience is certainly on their side.

Monday was Alzheimer Awareness Day and the Society launched its 20th annual Coffee Break initiative, which invites people and groups to host easy and fun coffee breaks for their friends and colleagues while raising awareness and funds for a disease with which nearly 750,000 Canadians are currently living.

Open to everyone in the community, the Society hopes to get local businesses and groups on board with their coffee breaks and, according to Loren Fried, the Society's President, the ?sky's the limit on how big and creative? you can get with your coffee break.

?This is our 20th season hosting Coffee Break events and every year we're amazed at how the community rallies to support us,? said Mr. Fried, who heads up the York Region branch of the society from their Aurora headquarters. ?It takes teamwork to tackle this disease and it is great to see so many people wanting to make a difference in the lives of those with this disease.?

In addition to raising funds, these fundraisers are also intended to reduce stigma surrounding the disease. Reducing the stigma, says the Society, is a vital step in improving the quality of life of those afflicted, while better enabling them to live independent lives with a sense of wellbeing.

?It is definitely a means to increase awareness, getting away from this stigma that someone is senile, or just an old man or woman,? says Emily Delaney of the Alzheimer Society of York Region. ?There really is a disease associated with Alzheimer's and however we can get the word out to people to talk about and raise awareness of dementia and what the signals are for the initial onset and what people can look out for in their own family.?

As the population ages, this is expected to become a growing problem with the number of afflicted set to top 1.4 million in less than 20 years. Ms. Delaney says there is already an increasing need for respite care, which will be a primary destination for funds raised during the Coffee Break campaign. Many individuals living with Alzheimer's live at home with their spouse, or their children and, through these respite programs, they are able to come to the Society for their day programs to benefit from tailored stimulation while also giving a much needed break to their caregivers.

?We have activities, we have meals, so by keeping their senses stimulated, you are keeping the brain going and slowing down the effects of Alzheimer's,? she says. ?We need more places and spots to provide day programs and respite care.?

Additional funds are also being raised through local Bulk Barn locations, through sales of decals priced between $1 and $5.

Over the previous 19 years, the Coffee Break campaign has raised over $18.5 million nation-wide. This year, on the program's 20th anniversary, they have set a $1.5 million fundraising goal to take them to $20 million in 20 years. Locally, the York Region arm hopes to raise $30,000.

?This is a fundraiser that is a do-it-yourself,? says Ms. Delaney. ?We provide the kit with marketing materials and you can make it what you want. You can make it as big or small as you desire and it is a wonderful cause. It can be a fun social gathering involving your family, friends or coworkers.?

For more information on the program, visit www.alzheimer.ca or call 905-726-3477.