

Walk For Alzheimer's aims to raise \$120,000 for York Region and growing needs

More than 17,000 York Region residents are currently living with dementia and this number is expected to double in less than a decade.

As such, the services provided by the Alzheimer Society of York Region are needed now more than ever before.

On Saturday, May 25, you can lace up and help support these valuable programs through the IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's.

Set to take place at 8 a.m. at Lake Wilcox Park (12895 Bayview Avenue), this year's walk aims to raise \$125,000 to support programs that are not financed through government dollars.

"Dementia not only affects the person living with the disease, but also their caregivers who often become isolated as the disease advances," said AS York's CEO Kari Quinn-Humphrey in a statement.

AS York notes that this year's funds will go towards social and recreational programs, while also providing services to caregivers and families of those living with dementia, respite support and education.

Helping spearhead this year's walk is Andrea Ubell, Director of Programs for AS York.

Ubell has been involved with the Society for more than 30 years and although she said last year's event was the best yet, she's hoping this one will top them all.

She comes to the table with family experience dealing with Alzheimer's and various forms of dementia. For her, although the walk itself is short in duration, it has a huge impact on the community.

"We've set our goal at \$120,000 because it goes directly to programs and services within York Region," she says. "This is something that touches many of the people who work for us but more importantly the people who walk for us are also touched by this. I am walking in honour of my dad's parents - both of them had dementia and Alzheimer's disease - and my grandmother's mother had Parkinson's-related dementia so many of us are walking for family we know and in honour of them. It is wonderful to see family units come decked out in matching t-shirts while carrying a picture of their family member they're walking with, and sometimes the families bring their family member out of long-term care or, often, home - maybe with some mobility problems and they have them walking with them. It is really an inspiring day.

"[Funds will go] to programs that are not funded. We do receive funding from the Ministry of Health for our day programs, for social work, education, but it is not funded 100 per cent. Some of that money will go to buttress those programs but there are other programs that are not funded."

Such programs, she adds, include Minds in Motion to keep brains stimulated, social groups like book and dining clubs, and a burgeoning music project which will see clients receive MP3 players and earphones programmed with specialized music for persons living with dementia.

"It's stuff that they relate to and a lot has been shown about how music is a wonderful way of connecting with people. We have these available to people in the community for free so the money will be going to that as well, and there are other things in the works.

"This is our premiere fundraising event in York Region. In fact, you will be joining families walking across the country in the name of Alzheimer's. It is a very important fundraiser for us. For families who want to participate, that is wonderful, but we can always use assistance throughout the year. We are always looking for volunteers in our day programs, volunteers for this event. In fact, if

you've got a high school student who needs some hours, give us a call because they can help on the day of the event. For me, last year, that was amazing because there were probably close to 50 volunteers involved during that day last year. It has really taken on a mind of its own. You can live well with the disease if you're equipped with the right information and the right supports. Most people live in the community when they are living with dementia with their family care partners and their families around. For every person who is diagnosed, the research suggests there are 12, maybe 14 family members who are affected and directly supporting the person. It really is a family disease.?

For more information on this year's event and how you can support the cause, visit www.alzgiving.ca/yorkregion2024.

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