

Generations of area family impacted, supported by Alzheimer Society



After Elizabeth De Faria's grandmother began showing signs of memory loss after a bad fall, she and her family didn't know in which direction to turn.

As her grandmother's needs became greater, their list of questions became longer, and eventually they found a vital lifeline in the Alzheimer Society of York Region.

Then based in Newmarket, De Faria describes this first connection with the Society as 'like a miracle' as they navigated these difficult waters.

These waters only became choppier when, in the years following her grandmother's passing, De Faria's own parents became afflicted by different forms of dementia and, as they have in the past, the Alzheimer Society of York Region has once again been that lifeline.

De Faria and her family are set to return the support this weekend as the Society hosts the 2026 IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's on Saturday, May 30, at Lake Wilcox Park in Richmond Hill.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Alzheimer Society of York Region and, in a sense, De Faria has been with them every step of the way.

'Nearly 40 years ago, we began our journey with the Alzheimer Society of York Region, and we are still utilizing and cherishing their invaluable help today,' she says. 'The Alzheimer Society of York Region has helped our family when we needed it most. Staff at AS York are the experts. They know how you feel when no one else does. Because of that, you feel instant comfort and have a new calm, knowing you are no longer alone. They are with you every step of the way.'

With just days to go before the community laces up for the cause, De Faria said she was a bit trepidatious of sharing her story in front of the crowd, but knew it was important to build awareness of the myriad programs and supports AS York offers to individuals and families in need.

Looking back on her own family's journey with the organization, she cites their day program as just one example of a vital service that will be supported by the funds raised this weekend.

?My grandmother started going to the day group and it was like a door opened up for my mom, especially at that time. She was the main caregiver, so she actually had a little bit of room to breathe, to think. There were all those kids at home and my dad ? it was tremendous, not just for my grandmother, but really for the caregivers. Nowadays, there's a tremendous amount more supports. It's mind-boggling when I go on the website and see all the paths, programs and people you can connect with ? and social workers that can help you.?

The multitude of pathways have been very helpful to the De Faria family as their needs have become more complex with her mother now in the later stages of dementia herself and her father diagnosed with the rare supranuclear palsy.

?My mom and I were teammates,? she says of caring for her grandmother and father, and taking things in turns. ?When my mother got sick [during COVID], I was like, ?Okay, who is going to help me? Who's my team? I don't have one anymore.' That was pretty devastating. In [AS York] I had absolutely amazing people who were really passionate, who really loved what they were doing ? very compassionate people. To have somebody on the other end of the phone who knows, who can just listen, and try to direct you on what you should do, what you could do, what they can offer during the COVID time, was very helpful.

?Last year, I thought, my God, all the stuff they've done for us, all the situations that, when we needed their help the most, they're the people who have pulled us through, every single time, and I have to give back. When I went to last year's Walk, it was so powerful, so emotional, I burst into tears. It just felt so good to be doing something to give back, to raise awareness, to tell other people, ?Hey, don't feel alone. Don't hide in the darkness. These people are really the ones you need to talk to.'

?I've seen the immense growth of AS York and the immense support and that' because of the people they have, the people who have done fundraising, and my message is strength, togetherness, and to not feel alone, to not be afraid to talk about it, but come out and use the strength of other people to help you get through it. There's so much help that comes from that.?

For more information on this year's Walk, including how to register as an individual or team, or to support others, visit alzheimer.ca/york/en/2026IGWalk.

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