

Minds in Motion program gets boost from 100 Women Who Care



Everyone can benefit from keeping their minds and bodies as active as possible, but for people living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, and indeed their caregivers, it is absolutely essential.

This is a need the Alzheimer Society of York Region aims to address through their Minds in Motion program, an exercise and psycho-social program for the person living with dementia and the caregiver; and it is a need recognized by 100 Women Who Care York Region.

Last Thursday, representatives from 100 Women Who Care CYR came to the Society's Aurora headquarters to present a cheque of more than \$12,000, the results from their quarterly fundraising meeting.

Every three months, members of 100 Women Who Care CYR come together, \$100 in hand, and over the course of an hour, more than \$10,000 can be raised to support a community charity or non-profit.

This last quarter, the Society's Minds in Motion initiative came to the fore.

The program, said 100 Women member Bonnie Munslow, struck a chord with everyone in the group because "we all know somebody who might be struggling with dementia, and maybe we envision our parents and ourselves going down this road."

"It was a remarkable presentation for an amazing cause," said Bonnie of the pitch delivered at their most recent meeting on behalf of Minds in Motion by fellow member Sue.

But the beauty of Minds in Motion is it allows parents and their children, and anyone impacted by dementia, to travel that road together.

Kari Quinn-Humphrey, Executive Director of the Alzheimer Society of York Region, says the Minds in Motion benefits both caregiver and the person living with dementia as it has both an exercise component and a social-supportive environment through a therapeutic lens.

"They have an exercise class and they also have social time" it helps reduce social isolation, it brings some fun, it's good for their health, and it's just overall a well-balanced program," she said. "It allows them both to be social, it allows them to do something that is equal for both of them to participate in. It allows the caregiver to just be a part of the relationship with the person living with dementia versus being the caregiver—they get to take a step away from being a caregiver and just be in the relationship with the person, whether it is their parent or their spouse, and it just gives them the chance to be with the individual."

These benefits have long been evident for the Society and it has been a program that residents have enjoyed for years, prior to the pandemic. When health restrictions temporarily scuttled programs for so many organizations, the Society quickly shifted the program to Zoom where it thrived.

“We received rave reviews, particularly during COVID and we saw it explode during COVID and had lots of positive reaction,” says Yolanda Mol Amelink. “We had our recreational person do exercises virtually, but it was still an opportunity to set time aside during the day to spend with your partner, your parent, or your child.”

Adds Quinn-Humphrey: “It has been so successful and we see the value of it. It is one of those fun programs as well as preventative programs where you really get to see how exercise is so important, but being social is very, very important to be able to continue, even if you have dementia and it becomes very difficult for someone to be social when they're a caregiver. The fact that they are able to be social with other people who were going through similar situations was also very valuable.”

MATCHING DONATION CAMPAIGN TO LAUNCH AUGUST 30

Beginning August 30, the community can step up to support Society programs like Minds in Motion. Launching to coincide with World Alzheimer Month in September, thanks to the Catherine Booth & Michael Kirk Social Recreation Fund, those wishing to make a financial contribution at bit.ly/GivetoMindsinMotion will see their donations matched.

“Throughout our lives, we become forever changed by the people who matter to us most. For Catherine Booth, they include her dad, Walter. Walter Booth was a gifted engineer, a successful businessman, and a father who had a generous spirit. Catherine admired and loved her dad,” says the Society. “As her mentor, he inspired her to pursue her own career in engineering and on her graduation day, he was the one who placed Catherine's Iron Ring on her finger—one of the most special memories they shared. Throughout his life, he was always on the go, but life took a turn shortly after Walter retired. The family lost their wonderful mother, Marilyn.

“Then Walter was diagnosed with dementia. Watching how Alzheimer's disease affected Walter more and more was heartbreaking for Catherine and her family. He became more withdrawn over time, and they didn't know how to help him. That is why Catherine Booth and Michael Kirk created their Social Recreation Fund and have agreed to double the impact of all monthly donations in honour of World Alzheimer's Month.”

Adds Catherine: “We wanted to do something meaningful to honour the memory of my dad. He was a great father, mentor, leader and philanthropist who taught us the power of giving. Together, we honour him and carry on his legacy through this matching gift.”

By Brock Weir
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