

## Walk for Alzheimer's will help Society address significant community needs ? one step at a time

As the Alzheimer Society of York Region marks 40 years in the community, they're doing so while managing wait lists for day programs that have more than doubled from this point last year, coupled with the rising costs of making these programs a reality.

This month, community members can help the Aurora-based Society address these important community needs one step at a time through the IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's.

Set for Saturday, May 30, at Lake Wilcox Park in Richmond Hill, the walk will not only raise awareness of various forms of dementia and the programs designed by the Society to help client and caregiver alike on this difficult journey, but give participants an opportunity to pay tribute to those lost to the disease.

Every dollar raised during the walk will stay in York Region, helping an estimated 21,000 people in this community living with dementia ? and, as the Society notes, for every one person diagnosed with dementia, another 10 to 12 people are directly impacted.

?'The goal this year is to raise \$165,000 and we're well on our way,?' says Yolanda Mol Amelink, Director of Philanthropy for the Alzheimer Society of York Region.

Kari Quinn-Humphrey, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of York Region, says the organization's programs are ?trying to reach everyone where they are in the disease process,?' and funds raised through the Walk will help ?fill the gaps.?'

?'We receive a lot of government funding, but this allows us that flexibility to support the community where they need that support,?' she says.

And this flexibility is particularly important in addressing rapidly increasing demand.

?'Post-COVID, the waitlist for our day programs were down, but they are double what they were last year,?' says Quinn-Humphrey. ?'The need is growing and people are seeking more supports, that they're not able to do on their own and they need help.?'

?'I think there's more complexity,?' she adds, when asked whether this significant uptick is the result of community growth, an aging population, more individuals receiving a proper diagnosis, or a combination of factors. ?'People are staying in the community longer because the waitlists for long-term care homes are so long. People want to remain home, so caregivers are trying to do that more.?'

This increased demand coincides with the increased costs of just about everything these days ? including the resources it takes to make these vital day programs operational.

?'We're trying not to raise our fees for the day programs as the cost-of-living increases,?' says Quinn-Humphrey, stressing the increasing costs of food, materials and IT services, as well as the cost of gas and automobile insurance ? vital components in bringing clients to and from the programs.

?'You don't think about IT cybersecurity for a non-profit organization, but those costs and protecting our clients' privacy and donor privacy, we have to stay on top of that, and that's not something everyone considers when they're making a donation to the Society. They want it to go to the programs, which we all want, but, at the same time, we also do have those hidden costs that all charities have, that people aren't always thinking about the importance of, and we have to keep that top of mind.?'

As the May 30 event approaches there are a number of ways you can support the Walk and the Society it benefits. In addition to registering to walk yourself, you can help sponsor a registered individual or team, volunteer for the day of, and, if you're not available on the day, there are many more chances to volunteer for the Society throughout the year.

?There's more opportunities to volunteer with the organization than just with the event because now we are now embedding volunteers to support a lot of our programs, including the day program,? says Mol Amelink. ?I know that we have a lot of retirees in the Aurora community that are looking to support the community in that way, and that's a great way to engage with the Alzheimer's Society of York Region. We have our dementia-friendly communities training, so organizations in Aurora who are as committed as we are to creating a more dementia-friendly community, we offer them free raining as well and a lot more people are taking advantage of that ? but we have some ways to go still.?

Adds Quinn-Humphrey: ?Our volunteer coordinator's goal is that she has a volunteer every day in every one of our day programs. So, if the community could help us to achieve that, that's our new volunteer coordinator's goal. An [ideal volunteer is someone who is] open learning about the disease process and how they can communicate well and support that person if they're open to that. If they have a special talent, like they can play a musical instrument, or if they're an artist, or if they can enrich people's lives through one of their talents they'd be willing to share, that would be amazing?

For more information about the upcoming Walk, including registration, sponsorship, and volunteer opportunities, visit [www.alzgiving.ca/yorkregion2026](http://www.alzgiving.ca/yorkregion2026).

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