

## Alzheimer's Support Group

### Alzheimer's disease and Dementia:

Dementia is a disease that can dramatically impact our lives. Dementia affects individuals, and their families and friends. As the age of our population increases so too does the prevalence of dementia. There are over 8,666 people living with dementia in Newfoundland and Labrador today, but this number is predicted to increase to 14,485 people by 2035. It is estimated that about 4 family members are affected with one diagnosis in a family. Approximately 214 new cases of dementia are diagnosed yearly in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### How does dementia affect us?

It is estimated that half of those individuals affected by dementia live in the community and the other half live in institutional care such as a personal care home or nursing home (Rising Tide, 2012). The majority of those at home live with caregivers who are often elderly themselves. In Canada in 2011, unpaid caregivers spent 444 million hours caring for a person with dementia in their home. This is expected to rise 1.2 billion hours by 2040.

These hours of care take a major toll on a caregiver's physical and emotional well-being. Caregivers often experience declines in their physical and emotional health due to the heavy demands of care given to a person with dementia.

### "Help for Today":

In October 2015, Western Health in partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Newfoundland and Labrador has established family support groups in Western Newfoundland. The support groups are comprised of Western Health staff member(s), and family and friends of people on the Alzheimer's journey. There are two family support groups. The Corner Brook and North group which includes participants from Corner Brook, Bonne Bay and Port Saunders areas. This group meets in Corner Brook Long Term Care on the second Wednesday of each month. The Stephenville (Bay St. George) and South group which includes participants from Stephenville, Burgeo and Port aux Basques areas. This group meets in Bay St. George Long Term Care on the second Tuesday of each month. Both groups use video conferencing to connect to the rural sites.

These groups provide peer support and act as resources for the family and friends of individuals with dementia. All members are provided with an orientation which includes information on Alzheimer's disease and dementias and support group functioning. Meetings usually last 90 minutes and include short education sessions and open group discussion on topics selected by group members.

The support group meetings provide an opportunity for the members to speak freely and in confidence about their feelings and what it is like living as the loved one of a person going through the Alzheimer's

journey. The groups have been very successful since their start and have been experiencing continued growth in attendance.

For further info on the Western Alzheimer's Support Group please contact:

**Corner Brook North** 637-3999 ext. 3513

**Stephenville South** 646-5800 ext. 7231

Other resources are available through the Alzheimer Society of Newfoundland and Labrador including the First Link Program, the Help line and Education for the caregiver – Learning series. To contact the Alzheimer Society of Newfoundland and Labrador please call 1- 877-776-0608

Or email [info@alzheimer.nl.ca](mailto:info@alzheimer.nl.ca)

Or on the web at <http://www.alzheimer.ca/nl>