



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 20, 2011

Summertime support for Okanagan residents on the dementia journey

Kelowna, B.C. - With summer finally here, the Alzheimer Society of B.C. is encouraging Okanagan residents on the dementia journey to stay active and informed when it comes to their health. The Alzheimer Society of B.C. offers many programs to aid in this, including Minds in Motion™ and First Link®.

Minds in Motion™ is a fitness and social program for people experiencing early-stage memory loss due to Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia and their caregivers. The program promotes the concept of healthy living and the establishment of support networks early on the dementia journey. There are currently two Minds in Motion™ locations in the Okanagan, one in Kelowna and one in Vernon. Both locations have been overwhelmingly popular with local residents since their inception in January.

"The positive response we have received from participants is fantastic," says Melanie Wasylyshen, who coordinates the Minds in Motion™ program in the Okanagan. "The connection that couples have made with each other in such a short time frame is amazing. We're all here to participate and at the same time lend support and to hear the laughter in the room during our sessions shows the strength of those connections."

First Link® is an early intervention service designed to connect individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia with services and support as soon as possible after diagnosis. Formal referral from physicians and health professionals allows for proactive contact with individuals and families.

"Most of the people that I have been contacting have been relieved to have information and are thankful that we are thinking of them. They are happy to know that we are there for them now and for down the road as the disease progresses," says Phyllis Dyck, the First Link® coordinator for the Alzheimer Society of B.C. North & Central Okanagan resource centre.

"We are exceptionally impressed with First Link®. Being involved has filled a void – we interact with couples in the same boat. The materials are extremely helpful. We now feel a much heightened sense of hope, support and calm," says one Okanagan First Link® participant. "Our love has deepened, the panic has subsided and there's more easy flow in our lives."

These programs have expanded in the Okanagan and five other BC communities thanks to a province-wide funding contract with the Ministry of Health Services last September. "It enabled us to enhance the support we are providing to families on the dementia journey," said Jean Blake, CEO, Alzheimer Society of B.C. "It means we're able to proactively reach out to individuals who have recently been diagnosed with the disease, provide support sooner to them and their caregivers, and better prepare and support them through their journey with the disease."

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is the only province-wide organization providing support, education, and information about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias through support groups, telephone workshops, education programs, and the Dementia Helpline toll-free province-wide at 1-800-936-6033.

The Society serves Kelowna residents at our North & Central Resource Centre, found within the historic Knowles House at 865 Bernard Avenue in Kelowna and can be reached at 250-860-0305 or toll-free at 1-800-634-3399. In addition to Minds in Motion™ and First Link®, the resource centre has support groups and education programs for both family caregivers and people with early stage dementia. Learn more about the Alzheimer Society of B.C., at www.alzheimerbc.org.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Ruby Ng, Director, Marketing & Communications, Alzheimer Society of B.C.
Phone: 604-742-4919 | Cell: 604-828-9516 | E-mail: rng@alzheimerbc.org



ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF B.C.
#300 – 828 West 8th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 1E2
TEL: 604-681-6530 FAX: 604-669-6907 TOLL FREE: 1-800-667-3742
WEBSITE: www.alzheimerbc.org E-MAIL: info@alzheimerbc.org
CHARITABLE REGISTRATION BN #11878 4891 RR0001