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## **Summertime support for Richmond and Vancouver residents on the dementia journey**

**Richmond and Vancouver, B.C.** - With summer finally here, the Alzheimer Society of B.C. is encouraging Richmond and Vancouver 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 care partners. The program promotes the concept of healthy living and the establishment of support networks early on the dementia journey. There are currently three Minds in Motion™ locations in the Richmond and Vancouver area, two in Richmond and one in Kitsilano. All locations have been overwhelmingly popular with local residents since their inception in January.

"We have received a fantastic response," says Kate Cowell, who coordinates the Minds in Motion™ programs in Richmond and Vancouver. "They really value the exercise portion because it is something they don't necessarily have access to through other channels."

"It is an opportunity for caregivers and people with dementia to attend together, the only one of its kind. People are making connections with each other and that's the most important part of the program."

First Link® is an early intervention service designed to connect individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's disease or another 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. "When I make the outreach calls to families, most people are very receptive, says Michele McCabe, the First Link® coordinator for the Alzheimer Society of B.C. in Richmond and South Delta resource centre. "This is a challenging disease that brings a lot of change, so they are grateful to get a call."

"Some people are cautious but most people are very receptive. A lot of people are living alone with the challenges of this disease so when they hear from someone like the First Link® coordinators, they feel really relieved that there is someone who cares and is willing to support them, and who has information that can be helpful for them."

For many people, hearing from the First Link® coordinators is a relief, it helps them feel like they can cope better. "One woman said getting information and support felt like a door was opening, another said the call had lightened his load because it was good to know there was someone a phone call away that cared."

These programs have expanded in Richmond, Vancouver and five other BC communities thanks to a province-wide \$1 million funding commitment the Ministry of Health Services made last September. "That meant that we have been able 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 Richmond residents at our Richmond and South Delta Resource Centre, found at 305-6411 Buswell Street in Richmond and can be reached at 604-238-7390.

The Society serves Vancouver residents at our Vancouver Resource Centre, found at G01 - 828 West 8th Avenue in Vancouver and can be reached at 604-742-4927.

In addition to Minds in Motion™ and First Link®, the resource centres have 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](http://www.alzheimerbc.org).

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