



MEDIA RELEASE

TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2013

RUNNERS RAISE FUNDS AND AWARENESS FOR DEMENTIA SUPPORT CHARITY

More than 30 runners will lace up to run Friday's Appleby Bermuda Day Half-Marathon Derby to support a charity that works to help the Island's dementia patients and their families.

The runners—including local women's elite Victoria Fiddick—will wear tank tops to promote Action on Alzheimer's & Dementia (AAD), a registered non-profit, founded by Bermudian Elizabeth Stewart last year. Many of them are also raising sponsorship to run the popular 13.1-miler.

Amy Fox, aquatics supervisor at the National Sports Centre, has already raised pledges of \$1,500 in sponsorship funds for AAD—and hopes to up that tally before she runs the historic race for the first time Friday. "A lot of people have been really generous," says Fox, 23.

AAD helps families trying to cope with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia; it has begun offering art-therapy courses in some care homes and also works to educate medical professionals, caregivers, nursing homes and other health services in Bermuda about the best care and treatment practices for growing numbers of dementia patients.

"The primary goal for May 24th is to raise awareness about dementia and to highlight the need for better care for those living with dementia on the Island," says Stewart, 41, who plans to run the May 24 relay event. Her mother Judith, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's at age 67, died after seven years with the disease last May. "As a society, we must raise the bar on care and understand that those with dementia can lead fulfilling lives if they are supported in the right way. They must not be forgotten or written off."

The UK marks Dementia Awareness Week this week. Alzheimer's is one of numerous types of dementia, and one of the most common. A progressive disease that destroys areas of the brain, it causes memory loss, confusion, and eventual loss of speech, understanding and movement. While most cases of Alzheimer's develop after age 65, so-called 'early-onset' Alzheimer's can be diagnosed in people as young as 30. The disease has no cure, but studies indicate drugs can help slow its progression.

“I am truly grateful to those who are supporting the charity,” says Stewart. “We have approximately 35 people running this year and we’ll also have a number of supporters along the route cheering them on.”

Top women’s contender Fiddick, who will race Friday for AAD, knows the struggles of dementia patients and their families after working as a psychiatric nurse in her native Sweden before she moved to Bermuda in 1986.

“I support it all the way,” says Fiddick. “There’s a huge need. The elderly always get second-hand treatment anyway and this disease, in particular, needs our support.”

For more information about AAD, please contact Elizabeth Stewart at 538-5494 or alzbermuda@yahoo.com. Useful website: www.alzbermuda.com.

PHOTO CUTLINE: Some of the 35-plus athletes who will run for dementia support charity AAD this May 24, including elite local women’s competitor Victoria Fiddick