



MEDIA RELEASE

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AAD marks “Dementia Awareness Week”

A Bermuda-registered charity is marking the Island’s first “Dementia Awareness Week” starting today, September 21, with a host of events to focus community attention on Alzheimer’s Disease and other forms of dementia.

Kicking off today on World Alzheimer’s Day, Action on Alzheimer’s & Dementia (AAD) has organised screenings of two acclaimed documentaries, a rum-tasting fundraiser and an innovative awareness campaign whose message is that life doesn’t end with a dementia diagnosis. But the charity stresses better quality care is needed for the Island’s almost 1,000 individuals living with dementia —a number that is predicted to balloon over the coming decades.

“We’ve seen just the tip of the iceberg,” says AAD President Elizabeth Stewart, whose mother died of Alzheimer’s in May 2012. “People are living longer and it’s estimated roughly 50-million people are living with dementia worldwide. But it’s not just a disease of the elderly — individuals can be diagnosed with Alzheimer’s as young as age 30. In Bermuda we are aware of some people with Alzheimer’s who are in their 40s.”

AAD was established as Charity 929 in 2012 to give much-needed support to people living with dementia in Bermuda, along with their families and caregivers. As well as resources and emotional support, it provides financial assistance for medications or medical equipment to those in need, along with free home assessments and occupational therapy. For those with dementia, it also organises weekly activities through a partnership with WindReach Recreational Village and Peace Lutheran Church, Paget—including art, music, laughter therapy, Bocce ball and animal interaction.

Advocacy and education are also the charity’s goals. It is working to coach medical professionals, caregivers, nursing homes and other health services in Bermuda about the best care and treatment practices for people with dementia. Alzheimer’s is one of numerous types of dementia, and 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. The disease has no cure, but studies indicate drugs can help alleviate symptoms.

“Contrary to popular belief, dementia is not normal aging,” says Stewart. “It is a disease—like cancer—and we need to start treating it as such, from national policy to public perception.”

An AAD public awareness campaign featuring Bermudians of different ages who are living with dementia will run this week and over the next few months. Public events scheduled during Dementia Awareness Week include:

- Screening of *You're Looking at Me Like I Live Here and I Don't* at BUEI, 6:30 p.m., tickets \$10, Monday, September 22;
- A FREE public presentation at BUEI, 6 p.m, Tuesday, September 23;
- Bacardi rum-tasting fundraiser, Bermuda Society of Arts, City Hall, 6–8:30 p.m., Friday, September 26;
- Screening of the Sundance Audience Award-winning US documentary, *Alive Inside*, followed by a Q&A with the movie's Dan Cohen, founder of non-profit organisation Music & Memory. BUEI, 5 p.m, Saturday, September 27th

“Our hope is that the whole Bermuda community begins to understand this disease better, so that more support, resources and policies can be put in place to help people with dementia,” says Stewart. “With a strong support network, good care and activities that help connect them with others, individuals with dementia can continue to lead enriching lives.”

For tickets or more information about AAD's Dementia Awareness Week events, or its regular programmes, activities and resources, contact alzbermuda@yahoo.com or 707-0600. Follow AADBermuda on Facebook and Twitter @aadbermuda.

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