

## FOREWORD

In times like these, it's nice to read a love story.

And the twenty-three stories you will find on the following pages of *Hearts Linked by Courage, Honouring Loved Ones and Caregivers on the Dementia Journey* are, at the heart, love stories.

Each of these stories shares a moment in time. The times are sad—the writer's spouse or parent or friend is living with a disease that takes away bits of them, piece by piece, until they die. The journey is filled with ups and downs, stirring a roller coaster of emotions. Yet, despite that, there is also laughter as children take on the role of the parent and try to embrace the new reality of flying kites in the park, or saying no to jumping out of bushes and scaring the kids walking to school.

There are also new connections made as old ones are lost. People living with dementia may have less to say, but when their favourite music is played, they sing along or dance like no one is watching. Caregivers who are used to watching their loved ones fade see a different side of them. Or a part of them they thought was lost

## HEARTS LINKED BY COURAGE

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forever comes back, bringing sharp moments of joy and the desire to make a connection again.

Caregivers of people living with dementia are strong and courageous. They take on a role they didn't sign up for, at a time in their lives when they were least expecting it. Yet these amazing people—those you'll read about on the following pages—provide care, devotion, love, and support when they themselves are often breaking, physically and emotionally. And they do this for one reason—love. This love keeps them going when others would have quit. Love allows them to brush teeth and wash hair, listen to the same stories, and silently mourn the *lasts* rather than the firsts.

Yet, at the same time, caregivers are scared ... scared they aren't doing enough for their loved ones. Worried about a future they can't control, and lonely as the journey progresses. They don't just lose their spouse, parent, or friend, but friends and family often disappear at a time when they are needed the most.

This book of stories by people impacted by dementia is for everyone. Readers who don't know a lot about the disease can learn about it from others who have experienced it. They can then use this knowledge to help those they come across who are impacted by

*Alzheimer Society of York Region —  
Honouring Loved Ones and Caregivers on the Dementia Journey*

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Alzheimer's disease in some way, by having a listening ear and an understanding that they are needed now more than ever. This book is also for new caregivers who can gain wisdom from individuals already on the dementia journey, so they know they are not alone and that there are people who have walked this path before them and can guide them along.

And finally, this book is for every person who has ever loved anyone living with dementia. Your story may not be in this book, but we are thinking of you and celebrating your love story.

Andrea Ubell, Director  
Programs and Client Services  
Alzheimer Society of York Region