

News Release

**For Immediate Release
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Missing Persons Week sheds light on mental health disorders like Alzheimer's disease and dementia

Regina, SK – The Government of Saskatchewan has proclaimed the week of May 4-10 as Missing Persons Week in the province. Alzheimer's disease is highlighted as one of the reasons people may go missing because more than 60% of people with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia will wander. If a person is not found within 24 hours, up to half of individuals who wander will suffer serious injury or death.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is encouraging family and caregivers to have a plan in place to help reduce risk and know how to respond if a person with dementia goes missing.

The main reason a person with dementia may wander is because they are searching for something or someone, something familiar, or returning to a place of the past. It's also common for a person with dementia to be driving and become disoriented and lost.

There are several ways to keep people with dementia independent and still be able to do things safely early in the disease process. "Taking the same route when walking or driving, carrying identification cards and letting someone know when you leave or arrive are good ways to decrease the chance of losing your way," says Joanne Michael, Program Services Manager at the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan.

Registering the person with dementia with MedicAlert® Safely Home® is another way families and caregivers can protect a person with dementia. A partnership between the Alzheimer Society and Medic Alert, this program ensures that should a person with dementia go missing, first responders or Good Samaritans can quickly identify the person by calling the Medic Alert 24-hour emergency hotline. Medic Alert staff will then contact family or caregivers to ensure the person with dementia arrives safely home.

It is often that a person in the community or a 'Good Samaritan' is the first to identify a person with dementia wandering. As a bystander, it's also important to recognize the signs of wandering and how to help ensure a safe return home. "If a person is not dressed for the weather, like wearing only a t-shirt in winter, or is looking around and appears to be confused, they may be wandering," says Michael. Ask them basic yes/no questions to help determine whether they need assistance, look for a Medic Alert Bracelet and call the number, or call the police and stay with the person until help arrives.

Along with many other supports and services, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan provides people with dementia, their family and caregivers with information to help identify triggers and strategies to reduce incidences of wandering. They also connect people with dementia and families to the MedicAlert® Safely Home® program. Registrations forms and more information

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are available at Alzheimer Society Resource Centres located throughout the province or at www.alzheimer.ca/sk.

Missing people are everyone's concern as every family and community is at risk of having someone go missing. When someone goes missing, family, friends, and co-workers are affected and it affects our sense of personal and community safety. The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is a proud member of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons. This Partnership was created to raise awareness, promote prevention strategies, and encourage a collaborative approach to better support families and communities of missing persons.

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is the province's leading dementia care and research charity. We provide support and education to people with dementia as well as their family and caregivers through peer group, telephone and individual support. We fund Saskatchewan-based and Canada-wide research focused on discovering a cause, a cure and improving the quality of life for those currently living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.

For more information about the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan and the Medic Alert® Safely Home® program, please visit www.alzheimer.ca/sk.

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