**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25th 2019**

**THE ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF IRELAND LAUNCHES TOUCHING REAL LIFE STORIES OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA AND CARERS FROM ALZTALKS EVENT IN SLIGO**

***\*Pictures available on request***

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) has launched a number of touching real life stories of people with dementia and carers that were recorded at the celebratory AlzTalks event at the Hawk’s Well Theatre in Sligo.

AlzTalks was developed to help shatter the stigma and misconceptions that often surround dementia. People living with dementia and carers presented to a packed live audience sharing their very personal experiences with dementia.

Dementia advocate Dr Helen Rochford-Brennan, who is from Tubbercurry in Co Sligo, was the ambassador for the event. Helen was diagnosed with Early Onset Alzheimer’s in July 2012. Helen is the Chairperson of the European Working Group of People with Dementia.

Speakers on the night included members of our Irish Dementia Working Group (IDWG) Jacinta Dixon (Dublin), Kevin Quaid (Limerick) and members of our Dementia Carers Campaign Network (DCCN) Rachel McMahon (Limerick) and Helena Quaid (Cork).

**● Jacinta Dixon** from Dublin and was diagnosed with dementia in 2017spoke about being diagnosed with dementia, finding her voice as an advocate and the stigma that often surrounds dementia in conversation with The ASI Advocacy Manager Avril Easton.

Watch Jacinta’s full conversation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vf9IiY29s9o&t=28s

**● Rachel McMahon** from Limerick cared for her Father Tony who passed away in 2012 spoke

about the loneliness and uncertainty and the profound shock that her family experienced when her dad, Tony, was diagnosed with dementia .

Rachel became interested in advocacy work in 2014 and began to share her experiences of living with dementia as a young carer through writing, radio and social media. In 2017 she joined the DCCN to lend her voice to a dedicated advocacy group of carers. She took up the mantle of caring again this year when her grandmother was diagnosed with mixed dementia.

Watch Rachel’s story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gnu4V5njEdE

 **●** Married couple **Kevin and Helena Quaid** both spoke of how dementia has impacted their lives and gave very different perspectives as Kevin is living with dementia and Helena is now Wife and Carer.

**● Kevin** is a Limerick native and was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia in 2017 at the age of 57, spoke about the fighting spirit of the Limerick hurling team and the fact they never gave up. He brings that same spirit to his life with dementia. After his diagnosis Kevin realised there was a lack of information about his particular form of dementia and wrote a book ‘Lewy Body Dementia, Survival and Me’.

**● Helena** originally from Cork spoke about the importance of caring for the carer and in supporting Kevin’s advocacy work Helena too has become an advocate.

**Watch Kevin and Helena share their stories:**

**Kevin:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzzwobvrLrg&t=1s
**Helena:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBu3S2TIiyg&t=3s

**The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Head of Advocacy & Public Affairs, Tina Leonard said:**

“We are very excited to launch these videos which detail the very personal stories of each advocate; from those who have dementia and those who have cared for a loved one with dementia. The general public needs to hear about the personal stories of people with dementia and their carers to help bring the subject of dementia, which is often not spoken about in Ireland, into the public domain.

“All of the presentations from our event in Sligo have now been uploaded to our AlzTalks YouTube channel which has been created to bring dementia out of the shadows and enable the many different voices of dementia to be heard all over the world.

“We hope this will provide a platform to allow awareness-building and perception-changing of dementia, given that a lack of understanding and stigma is still rife. Having people speak about their own lives and experiences creates a better understanding of the unique experiences of people living with dementia.”

The number of people with dementia in Ireland is expected to more than double over the next 20 years, from 55,000 today to 113,000 in 2036.

**All presentations from the event are now available to view via the ASI AlzTalks YouTube channel:** https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQchRMJ7fSy8ukfc9HF2PJw/videos

**Further Information:**

For all media enquiries, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Manager Cormac Cahill on 086 0441 214.

**Notes to the Editor:**
**● The Alzheimer Society of Ireland**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI) is the national leader in advocating for and providing dementia-specific supports and services and each year the organisation provides more than one million hours of community-based dementia-specific care throughout Ireland. A national non-profit organisation, the ASI is person centred, rights-based and grassroots led with the voice of the person with dementia and their carer at its core. The ASI also operates the Alzheimer National Helpline offering information and support to anyone affected by dementia at 1800 341 341 and provides a number of others supports and services to people with dementia and their carers across Ireland including 51 Day Care Centres and one Respite Care Centre. The ASI also provides Home Care, Family Carer Training, Dementia Advisers, Alzheimer Cafes and Social Clubs.

**● Dementia: Understand Together campaign**

Dementia: Understand Together is a public support, awareness and information campaign led by the HSE, working with the Alzheimer Society of Ireland and Genio, that aims to inspire people from all sections of society to stand together with the 500,000 Irish people whose families have been affected by dementia. For more information on dementia, and the services and supports available, Freephone 1800 341 341 or visit [www.understandtogether.ie](http://www.understandtogether.ie/)

**About dementia:**

• The number of people with dementia in Ireland is expected to more than double over the next 20 years, from 55,000 today to 113,000 in 2036.

• Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions which cause changes and damage to the brain.

• Dementia is progressive. There is currently no cure. Dementia is not simply a health issue but a social issue that requires a community response.

• The majority of people with dementia (63%) live at home in the community. Over 180,000 people in Ireland are currently or have been carers for a family member or partner with dementia with many more providing support and care in other ways.

• Each year over 4,000 people develop dementia. That’s at least 11 people every day and anyone can get dementia - even people in their 30s/40s/50s.

• 1 in 10 people diagnosed with dementia in Ireland is under 65.

• The overall cost of dementia care in Ireland is just over €1.69 billion per annum; 48% of this is attributable to family care; 43% is accounted for by residential care; formal health and social care services contribute only 9% to the total cost

*Figures referenced to Cahill, S. & Pierce, M. (2013) The Prevalence of Dementia in Ireland*