**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – THURSDAY, JUNE 13th 2019**

**AUTHOR, BROADCASTER AND CARER TEENA GATES HOPES TO INSPIRE OTHER FAMILY CARERS TO ADVOCATE FOR VITAL COMMUNITY SUPPORTS FOLLOWING HER SUCCESSFUL ONLINE CAMPAIGN**

Author, broadcaster and current carer Teena Gates discussed her hopes to inspire other family carers to create change for vital community supports following her successful #BringHimHome online campaign to secure a homecare package for her father, Terry (94), at a special event to mark Carers Week 2019 in Dublin today.

The Dementia Carers Campaign Network (DCCN), which is supported by The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, hosted the event called ‘Empowering Volunteer Family Carer Advocates’ which aimed to promote importance of the carer voice andto showcase the value of voluntary carers in Ireland.

Teena explained that after her father, Terry, was hospitalised for weeks and set up a successful online social media campaign to secure a homecare package for her dad. Teena is now a full-time carer for her dad and still works three days a week in the media. She is now determined to now speak up and advocate on behalf of other carers who are going through the same challenges.

The event, which was held in Wood Quay, Dublin 8, was aimed at all carers and not just carers of people with dementia, offered people the skills, confidence and knowledge to lobby, represent, campaign and highlight the issues and challenges that are currently facing family carers.

The speakers included The Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO Pat McLoughlin, Irish Cancer Society CEO Averil Power and Senior Manager from Carr Communications Jillian Garvey and was attended by staff, friends and supporters of the ASI and family carer advocates from partner organisations including Family Carers Ireland, Care Alliance and the Irish Cancer Society.

***Carer, author and broadcaster Teena Gates said:***

*“My 94-year-old father has an acquired brain injury and was diagnosed with dementia earlier this year. He was in hospital for two months and when he was ready to come home I was looking for a care package for him, but I was shocked to discover that some carers were waiting months and even years in some cases for a care package. My dad did not deserve to be institutionalised and I wanted him to be cared for at home, in his own house in his own community – that’s all anyone deserves. I was lucky that I was able to get a home care package for my Dad – but I know that there are so many others out there who are still trying to find one.*

*“Carers do so much great work on behalf of the State and save them so much money. Carers make huge sacrifices and actually feel guilty when they take a break or want to go out for a coffee. This shouldn’t be the case. Carers need to know that they must look after themselves and care for the carer is so important. It was great to be at this inspirational event today to encourage voluntary family carers to find their voice.”*

Carers Week 2019 is an opportunity to acknowledge the 370,000 family carers across Ireland. It is an opportunity to thank them and to let them know that they are valued. The ASI is one of 12 not-for-profit organisations that support Carers Week and this event is a part of an exciting range of events taking place across Ireland this week which are being held by partner organisations.

It is estimated that there are 55,000 people living with dementia in Ireland and for every one person with dementia three others are directly affected. The number of people with dementia is expected to more than double over the next 20 years to 113,000 in 2039. There are an estimated 50,000 carers of people with dementia in Ireland.

***The Alzheimer Society of Ireland CEO, Pat McLoughlin said:***

*“This was a timely event today to promote the value of the carer voice and to acknowledge them during Carers Week 2019. I feel having the voice of family carer advocates to the fore gives our organisation real integrity and there is a huge value in having the voice of carers in working to create change. This group has had a fantastic impact on our organisation in putting the real issues that are affecting people with dementia and their family carers on the table. The carers voice is involved in almost all aspects of our work including media engagements, lobbying and research and also take an active role in key events such as Pre-Budget Submissions and the Emergency Dementia Summit.*

*“The DCCN was set up in 2013 and made up of people who have experience caring for a loved one with dementia. It was set up to give a particular focus to dementia carers in Ireland and to raise awareness of issues affecting families living with dementia. The group has from grown from strength to strength and is made up of an Eastern Group which meets in Dublin and a Mid-Western Group which meets in Limerick. This is great progress over a very short period of time.”*

**-Ends-**

**For more information, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Manager, Cormac Cahill on 086 044 1214 or** **cormac.cahill@alzheimer.ie**

**Notes to the Editor:**

**About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland:**

The 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.

The ASI provides the following services:

* National Helpline
* Social Clubs
* Support Groups
* Day Care Services
* Home Care
* Dementia Advisor Service
* Mobile Information Bus

**Helpline:** The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline is open six days a week Monday to Friday 10am–5pm and Saturday 10am–4pm on 1800 341 341.

**Website:** [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie/)

**About Dementia:**

The number of people with dementia in Ireland is expected to more than double over the next 18 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 are 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.
* The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline is open six days a week Monday to Friday 10am–5pm and Saturday 10am–4pm on 1800 341 341.
* Figures referenced to Cahill, S. & Pierce, M. (2013) *The Prevalence of Dementia in Ireland*