**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday, 11th September 2019**

**INSPIRATIONAL DEMENTIA ADVOCATE KATHY RYAN AND VIRGIN MEDIA’S DERIC Ó hARTAGÁIN REUNITING TO LEAD THE ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF IRELAND’S CAMINO ADVENTURE 2019**

The inspirational dementia advocate ***Kathy Ryan*** and Virgin Media Television presenter ***Deric Ó hArtagáin*** are reuniting to take on The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s Camino Adventure to raise funds and public awareness for people with dementia during ***World Alzheimer’s Month*** this September*.*

Kathy, who was diagnosed with younger on-set Alzheimer in January 2014 and is Vice-Chair of our Irish Dementia Working Group (IDWG) and Deric will be leading a 32-strong group of walkers on the ***120km*** eight-day challenge journey of exploration along the***Portuguese Camino*** from Porto through to Santiago de Compostela from September 14th to 21st.

Kathy, who successfully completed last year’s Camino Adventure with Deric can’t wait to reunite and has described the upcoming walk as a ***dream come true***. Kathy is eager to show that having a dementia diagnosis is not a barrier to achieving your dreams and people with dementia can still do the things that others can do. Kathy and Deric are now spreading the ‘can do’ attitude ahead of their departure from Dublin this Saturday.

The participants on Team ASI are men and women of all ages and everyone has different reasons for taking part, but the one thing everyone has in common is the desire to help families in Ireland living with dementia, while taking part in a unique experience. The aim is to follow in the footsteps of many pilgrims throughout the ages while raising funds and public awareness for people with dementia in Ireland during World Alzheimer’s Month in September.

***World Alzheimer’s Month*** is an opportunity to raise awareness about a health issue that will affect more and more people as the years pass, while encouraging crucial efforts to support those already affected by dementia around the world. ***World Alzheimer’s Day*** is held on Friday, September 21st.

***Vice-Chair of the Irish Dementia Working Group (IDWG) Kathy Ryan said:*** *“Walking the Camino de Santiago last year was a dream come true for me. When I was diagnosed with dementia in 2014, I thought my chance of doing something like this was over. But thanks to The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, I was given the golden opportunity to take on this challenge and carry a banner for all people with dementia on this epic walk – and I just can’t wait to take on the Camino again this year. I must also thank my walking partner, Deric, for putting his heart and soul into this challenge; it means so much to me. He is an incredible guy. I got so much from walking last year’s Camino – it shows that people who receive this awful diagnosis should not give up and should stay active and connected with their community as best they can. This is World Alzheimer’s Month and both myself and Deric – and everyone in our group – are looking forward to raising awareness about dementia and how communities around Ireland can be more dementia aware, which means showing basic kindness and respect to people who have dementia and their families and carers in Ireland.”*

***TV Presenter, Virgin Media Television, Deric Ó hArtagáin said:*** *“Following on from a hugely successful Camino in Spain last year, this September I’m delighted to team up with The Alzheimer Society of Ireland once again to lead the group on a journey of exploration along the Portuguese Camino from Porto through to Santiago de Compostela. Not only will this be both a physical and mental endurance challenge, but also a spiritual one as we take with us in both our hearts and minds, not only all of those who live with the condition, but also their families and carers. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland plays a pivotal role in providing vital care, respite and social services to those in need. All funds raised from our trek will be going directly to assist and support essential supports and services for people with dementia across the charity’s nationwide network of centres. As ambassador, I’m really looking forward to rekindling past friendships, forming new ones and creating memories to last a lifetime.”*

**ENDS**

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

**About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI):**

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/)
**Twitter:** @alzheimersocirl
**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/TheAlzheimerSocietyofIreland/](http://www.facebook.com/TheAlzheimerSocietyofIreland/)

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