**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Tuesday, 11th August 2020**

**Beauty expert and entrepreneur Pamela Laird issues rallying call for public to make every step count for ASI’s first Alzheimer’s Memory Walk fundraiser in September**

***\*Pictures from Photocall Ireland attached***

Beauty expert, entrepreneur and latest ASI ambassador ***Pamela Laird*** has issued a rallying call for the public to make every step count for the first ***Alzheimer’s Memory Walk***, proudly supported by ***Iceland***, which is taking place nationwide on Sunday, 20th September to mark ***World Alzheimer’s Month 2020***.

Alzheimer’s Memory Walk is a ***family-friendly*** series of walks suitable for all ages and abilities to unite together with their families and communities to raise awareness and funds for dementia supports. The ASI is hoping that ***6,000 walkers*** across Ireland will help us raise ***€100,000*** for vital services that are helping to support so many people with dementia and their family carers across Ireland through the COVID-19 public health emergency and the aftermath of the lockdown.

One of those walkers will be ***Pamela Laird*** who is delighted to back the campaign and has shared her ***family connection with dementia*** as her father, Sylvester, was diagnosed with dementia in 2016. The Dublin-based entrepreneur has said while the family started noticing changes with her father as far back as 2010, the dementia diagnosis was still very challenging for them all to deal with – especially when the COVID-19 lockdown hit forcing the closure of vital face-to-face services.

The former ***Dragons Den*** and the ***BBC’s Apprentice*** contestant wants to put a spotlight on dementia during World Alzheimer’s Month and encourage others to reach out for support – like a member of her own family did when they completed The ASI’s family carer training course. Pamela will be doing the walk with her mam Yvonne and her Chihuahua, Tallulah, and wants others to do the same.

***Beauty expert, entrepreneur and latest ASI Ambassador, Pamela Laird said: “****Alzheimer’s Memory Walk is an excellent way to bring families and communities together to raise vital money and awareness during World Alz Month. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland does excellent work throughout the country and my family have used their supports to help my dad with his journey with dementia. They need to keep fundraising to keep their services running. Through my father’s diagnosis of dementia I am all too aware of what so many families go through in Ireland – the confusion, the sadness and the isolation. It’s at a time like this where we need to remember those suffering alone and get them the support that they desperately need. During Alzheimer’s Month 2020, I really want to put a spotlight on dementia as it desperately needs our attention. I’m really looking forward to taking part in Alzheimer’s Memory Walk on Sunday, September 20th. I would encourage everyone to do the same, it’s so simple. Go to* [*www.memorywalk.ie*](http://www.memorywalk.ie) *for details.”*

Alzheimer’s Memory Walk is guaranteed to be a ***feel-good and uplifting occasion*** and people are being encouraged to plan their own socially-distanced walk solo, with their household or within their community. So, whether that’s 5km, 10km or whatever distance people like – ***It’s Your Walk, Your Way***. There are family-friendly prices ***€5 for kids*** and ***€18 for adults***.

***Register for Alzheimer’s Memory Walk in 3 Simple Steps: 1.*** Visit [www.memorywalk.ie](http://www.memorywalk.ie)***; 2.*** Register for your pack and t-shirt***; 3.*** Plan your route for Sunday, September 20th.

***Jacinta Dixon***, a member of the ***Irish Dementia Working Group (IDWG)*** who lives in Clondalkin in Dublin, was diagnosed with dementia in 2016 and is really looking forward to getting back into her community after the COVID-19 lockdown and taking part in Alzheimer’s Memory Walk.

***Memory Walk Champion Jacinta Dixon said:*** *“Since I was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s four years ago I have kept as active as possible under the circumstances, continued to live well and be part of my community. But the past few months have been very challenging with cocooning and social distancing. At times it’s been frightening. Now I feel I am starting to get back out there – going shopping and taking my regular walks. That’s why I am so delighted to take part in Alzheimer’s Memory Walk – it will give me a purpose and a reason to get back out into my community again and I am really looking forward to doing a walk with my family on Sunday, 20th September to mark World Alzheimer’s Month. The theme of World Alzheimer’s Month is Let’s Talk About Dementia and I think Alzheimer’s Memory Walk gives everyone that opportunity – to get out there, go for a walk with your family, raise awareness for dementia and vital funds for those who need it the most.”*

***Managing Director, Iceland Stores Ireland Ltd, Ron Metcalfe said: “****Iceland are extremely proud to be charity partner with The Alzheimer Society of Ireland for the past four years. The ASI is an incredible organisation and their role within the communities of this country is invaluable. We are delighted to be supporting the Alzheimer’s Memory Walk in September and the Iceland team are passionate about getting involved in this wonderful event. It is a great way to have some fun while raising vital funds and awareness for The ASI.”*

The ASI has supported people with dementia and their families during COVID-19 as our Home Care, Dementia Advisers, National Helpline and Online Family Carer Training have remained open.

***The ASI has also implemented new ways of providing ASI supports remotely to our clients:***

* Expansion of National Helpline which offers a 1:1 call with a Dementia Nurse
* Alternative Activity Therapy for people living with dementia and their family carers who availed of day care prior to COVID-19
* Social Calls and Activity Engagement Calls (with Activity packs) on a weekly or biweekly basis
* Online Support Group for Family Carers to provide support and information to family carers

**ENDS**

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**NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

***About The Alzheimer Society of Ireland (ASI):***The ASI is the national leader in understanding and providing dementia-specific supports and services. With a national network of over 120 specialist services, 900 staff and 300 volunteers, each year they provide almost 900,000 hours of community-based, dementia-specific care throughout Ireland. For more information see [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

***Alzheimer National Helpline:***

For more information on our supports and services during this challenging time, please contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline where you can now also book in a 1:1 session with a Dementia Nurse or Dementia Adviser. The Helpline is open six days a week Monday to Friday 10am–5pm and Saturday 10am–4pm on 1800 341 341. Email at helpline@alzheimer.ie or via Live Chat at [www.alzheimer.ie](http://www.alzheimer.ie)

***World Alzheimer's Month***

September is World Alzheimer’s Month which is the international campaign every September to raise awareness and challenge the stigma that surrounds dementia. September 2020 will mark the ninth World Alzheimer's Month. The campaign was launched in 2012: World Alzheimer's Day is on 21st September each year. The theme for this year is ***Let’s Talk About Dementia***.

**ABOUT DEMENTIA**  
• The number of people with dementia in Ireland is expected to more than double from 64,000 today to 150,000 in 2045.\*  
• 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.  
• There are 11,000 new cases of dementia in Ireland each year. That’s at least 30 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  
  
*Figures referenced to Cahill, S. & Pierce, M. (2013) The Prevalence of Dementia in Ireland*

*\** *Health Atlas, Ireland (2020)*

*\*\*Figure referenced from Pierse, T., O’Shea, E. and Carney P. (2018) Estimates of the prevalence, incidence and severity of dementia in Ireland*