**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Sunday, 20th September 2020**

**First Virtual Alzheimer’s Memory Walk: Fahy Families undertaking epic five-day 125k ‘Irish Camino’ adventure to keep memories of ‘very special’ Kay alive**

***\*Photos from Ken Baker Photography attached***

The Fahy families are pushing themselves to the limit as they undertake an epic ***125km*** five-day self-titled ***‘Irish Camino’*** adventure as part of the first ever ***virtual Alzheimer’s Memory Walk*** to raise much-needed funds for The Alzheimer Society of Ireland.

Chief family organiser, ***Marian Purcell***, from Broadford, Co Limerick, left her local village with her family on Saturday at 9.30am and will arrive in Kilfenora, Co Clare on Wednesday afternoon, 23rd September to complete their own five-day Alzheimer’s Memory Walk.

Dementia is very close to Marian’s heart and she was inspired to organise this adventure by her mother, ***Kay Fahy***, who lived with dementia for seven years and ***sadly passed away in 2014***. The whole family have come together to walk in her memory and keep her memory alive.

Ever since the passing of their mother, Kay, on Christmas Day 2014, the family have continued to raise funds for The ASI but due to ***Covid-19 restrictions*** this year they have been unable to organise any of the usual fundraising events so as a family they are undertaking this walk as a means to raise much needed funds for The ASI.

Today well over ***2,500 walkers*** around Ireland are making every step count for The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s first ever ***Virtual*** ***Alzheimer’s Memory Walk***, proudly supported by ***Iceland***.

Tomorrow, ***Monday, September 21st*** is ***World Alzheimer’s Day 2020***.

***Family member Marian Purcell said:*** *“Dementia is a cause close to the heart of my family and many others in Ireland. We are all doing this Alzheimer’s Memory Walk in memory of my mother, Kay, who passed away in 2014 after living with Alzheimer’s for seven years. She was a very special person to us all and we are doing this to keep her memory alive. My family usually do the Camino Adventure with The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, but it was cancelled this year because of Covid-19, it would have been our sixth year doing it. But this 125km walk over five days from Broadford to Kilfenora is our ‘Irish Camino’ and is the next best thing! The whole family are really looking forward to making every step count. We’re all just looking forward to raising some money for the Alzheimer Society of Ireland that do such great work in communities around Ireland and we’ll hopefully also put a bit of a spot light on dementia and to encourage people to talk about dementia more. We need to talk about it more as a society. This was just something small that the whole family could do. I would like to thank all of my family for coming on board and joining in, they have all been so supportive.”*

***The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s Head of Fundraising Mairéad Dillon said:*** *“We are so grateful to the thousands of people taking part in our very first Alzheimer's Memory Walk right across the country and even as far as Australia and America. This walk, although virtual, is giving people the opportunity to walk with and show their support for the thousands of people living with dementia in Ireland. The Fahy family are just one example of how families can continue to remember their loved ones in such a wonderful way.”*

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 first Alzheimer’s Memory Walk went ***virtual*** to provide a wonderful opportunity for everyone to ***walk together, while staying apart*** to help raise much needed funds for people living with dementia in their communities all across Ireland.

All of today’s walkers from around Ireland are helping to raise ***much-needed funds*** 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.

***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*