**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday, 11th November 2020**

**Keeping memories alive this Christmas – Family carer shares heartfelt message for her mother on new Alzheimer’s Virtual Memory Tree**

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland has launched a ***Virtual Memory Tree*** to give people the opportunity to share a memory and dedicate a message to a loved one to remember and mark those who we hold close in our hearts at this special time of year.

By lighting up a star on ***memorytree.ie***, people can keep their memories alive and also help the ASI to support the ***500,000*** people in Ireland whose families have been impacted by dementia.

The ASI will be ***dedicating the star*** on top of our Virtual Memory Tree to all of those in the wider ASI family – those who used our services, attended our day care centres or helped us to advocate – that have sadly passed away this year.

***People can share a memory in different ways:***

* ***Keep Memories Alive:*** Share a memory of a loved one who has sadly passed away
* ***In Your Thoughts:*** Share a memory of a loved one you haven’t seen in a while
* ***Times of Joy:*** Share a memory of someone during a happy time or a time of celebration. Everyone can take part.

***We are urging people to make their memory count in three simple ways:***

1. *Visit memorytree.ie*
2. *Share a memory of a loved one*
3. *Donate to the ASI*

***Una Caulfield*** (59), from Drumcondra in Dublin, a member of the ***Dementia Carers Campaign Network (DCCN)*** which is supported by The ASI, has left a heartfelt message in memory of her mother Mary (94) who passed away in September of this year. Una was a full-time carer for her Mum following her dementia diagnosis seven years ago.

***Member of the DCCN Una Caulfield said:*** *“Caring for Mum in our home was something my family and I really wanted to do. It wasn't always easy but we are so glad we did it. The house is so empty now without her and we really miss her. This will be our first Christmas without her in 24 years and we are thinking about all of the fun times we had together. It’s so nice to keep her memory alive in this way on the ASI’s Virtual Christmas Tree. This is a verse from a poem that my friend wrote about my Mum and her sister and friends have told how they feel it really captures her spirit. It reads: ‘And Oh! The Laughter! What did we laugh at? The music, songs and stories Tales of the ordinary, Rich ones in the telling become richer.’"*

**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)

**ABOUT DEMENTIA**

* There are almost 64,000 people with dementia in Ireland and for every one person with dementia three others are directly affected;
* During the COVID-19 crisis, 86% of family carers were concerned about a decline in the person with dementia, while 61% of carers believe their own mental health has declined;
* Most people with dementia live at home (63%);
* No county in Ireland provides people with even a minimum standard of dementia community services and supports;
* The number of people with dementia will rise to 113,000 within the next twenty years
* 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;
* 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*

*\*Figure referenced from Alzheimer Europe (2020)* *Dementia in Europe Yearbook 2019 ‘Estimating the prevalence of dementia in Europe’*

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