**IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday, 21st July 2021**

**Virgin Media TV presenter Martin King and beauty expert and entrepreneur Pamela Laird issue rallying call for Virtual Alzheimer’s Memory Walk fundraiser**

***\*Pictures attached from Karen Morgan / Lensmen attached & additional pictures issued to all photo desks***

Virgin Media TV presenter ***Martin King*** and beauty expert and entrepreneur ***Pamela Laird*** have issued a rallying call for the public to make every step count for the second successive ***Virtual*** ***Alzheimer’s Memory Walk***, proudly supported by ***Iceland***, which is taking place nationwide on Sunday, 19th September during ***World Alzheimer’s Month 2021***.

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 ***5,000 walkers*** across Ireland will help us raise ***€250,000*** 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.

Walk on your own, with your household or your pet dog, it’s guaranteed to be a feel-good and uplifting occasion. It’s up to you where you walk from the back garden to the local park – remember on Sunday, September 19th – ***It’s Your Walk, Your Way***. Family-friendly prices ***€7*** for kids and ***€18*** for adults. Follow these 3 easy steps to take part: ***1.*** Visit www.memorywalk.ie; ***2.*** Register for your pack and t-shirt; ***3.*** Plan your route for Sunday, September 19th.

***Martin King*** shared his family connection with dementia in a ***moving documentary*** called ‘We Need to Talk About Dementia’, which formed part of the successful Donate for Dementia Week on Virgin Media TV last March, and received a warm reception for its honesty and sensitive portrayal of dementia. Martin’s mother, Christina, was diagnosed with dementia and passed away in 2019. Martin is delighted to support the Alzheimer’s Memory Walk this year as he hopes it will raise much awareness and funds for people with dementia and their family carers.

***Virgin Media TV Presenter Martin King said:*** *“I am delighted to be a part of Alzheimer’s Memory Walk this year – it’s a terrific way to raise awareness and raise vital funds for The Alzheimer Society of Ireland during World Alzheimer’s Month in September. Through my own mother’s journey with dementia I got a look at how tough it can be for families and they really need so much support. My Mam* Christina *was a beautiful soul, she was very caring and loving. She was a great mam and a great grand mam and then dementia came knocking at the door and she was in denial because she was afraid. Dementia and Alzheimer’s are called the long goodbye for a reason. You can’t stop it as it’s happening and it’s emotionally very painful to go through. There’s a terrible stigma that goes with dementia as well and that’s why it was great to do the ‘We Need to Talk About Dementia’ documentary and the Donate for Dementia Week on Virgin Media to raise much-needed awareness around the country and Alzheimer’s Memory Walk now is another way to do this. I would encourage everyone to take part it really is something for the whole family.” I’m really looking forward to taking part in Alzheimer’s Memory Walk on Sunday, September 19th. I would encourage everyone to do the same, it’s so simple. Go to* [*www.memorywalk.ie*](http://www.memorywalk.ie) *for details.”*

***Pamela Laird*** is also 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 pandemic. 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 is doing the walk with her mam Yvonne and her Chihuahua, Tallulah, and wants others to do the same.

***Beauty expert, entrepreneur and ASI Ambassador, Pamela Laird said:*** *“I am delighted to be ambassador for Alzheimer’s Memory Walk again this year – it’s an excellent way to bring families and communities together to raise vital money and awareness during World Alzheimer’s Month 2021. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland does excellent work throughout the country and my family have used their supports to help support my dad with his journey with dementia. The ASI needs 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 alone and get them the support that they desperately need. During Alzheimer’s Month 2021, I really want to put a spotlight on dementia as it desperately needs our attention. You can walk 5km, 10k or whatever distance can do. It’s Your Walk, Your Way. Alzheimer’s Memory Walk is suitable for all ages and abilities to unite together with our families and communities to raise awareness and vital funds for dementia supports and services. I’m really looking forward to taking part in Alzheimer’s Memory Walk on Sunday, September 19th. I would encourage everyone to do the same, it’s so simple. Go to* [*www.memorywalk.ie*](http://www.memorywalk.ie) *for details.”*

***Managing Director, Iceland Stores Ireland Ltd, Ron Metcalfe said:***

*“Over the last five years Iceland Ireland are a proud partner of The Alzheimer Society of Ireland. Colleagues throughout our 27 stores nationwide are passionately committed to raising vital funds to allow this charity to continue to provide essential services to communities across the country. In particular, we would encourage everyone to ‘get walking’ for the annual Alzheimer’s Memory Walk fundraiser this September. It is great way to support and raise awareness of the work of this important charity while also having a fun day out”.*

**ENDS**

**For more information contact The Alzheimer Society of Ireland Communications Manager Cormac Cahill** [**cormac.cahill@alzheimer.ie**](mailto:cormac.cahill@alzheimer.ie) **086 044 1214**

**NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

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

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland is the leading dementia specific service provider in Ireland. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland works across the country in the heart of local communities providing dementia specific services and supports and advocating for the rights and needs of all people living with dementia and their carers. Our vision is an Ireland where people on the journey of dementia are valued and supported. A national non-profit organisation, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland advocates, empowers and champions the rights of people living with dementia and their communities to quality support and services.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland National Helpline is open Monday to Friday 10am–5pm and Saturday 10am–4pm at 1800 341 341. The public can also email helpline@alzheimer.ie, or use Live Chat at www.alzheimer.ie    
**ABOUT DEMENTIA**

* There are 64,000 people with Dementia in Ireland and the number of people with the condition will more than double in the next 25 years to over 150,000 by 2045.\*
* 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.\*\*
* 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.
* 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 Pierce, T., O’Shea, E. and Carney P. (2018) Estimates of the prevalence, incidence and severity of dementia in Ireland.*