



Colina & David

*2017 Alzheimer Society
of Nova Scotia Gratitude Report*



You can picture the cheerleader and the football player who became high school sweethearts. She had the pom poms and he had the shoulder pads and the tough guy scowl. Well that was us, but it was so totally not us! The simple truth is that we met and fell in love because we shared the same friends and we were both active and outgoing. She liked my sense of humour—I was no academic all-star. **I liked, well, everything about her.**



Colina was always caring, friendly, active, fun—she lit up every room she was in. She still does, for me. We had 3 beautiful kids—Jordan, Jeremy and Emily. Our kids were into every sport you can imagine: basketball, lacrosse, football, canoeing, hockey, you name it.

And Colina was right into it all, lacing up skates and throwing footballs in the back yard. She also graduated with her Masters degree in Adult Education and worked as a teacher. When my job took us overseas she taught English to local retail and service workers. Our life was busy and joyful.

It still is, but in a different way since dementia joined our family.

Colina and I were living and working overseas and one day she came home from work and her face was ashen, her eyes hollow. "What's wrong, my love?" I asked. She looked me dead in the eyes and said, "I can't write. I can't make letters with my hands. All of a sudden my hands won't work when I try to write on the blackboard." A local doctor told us to go home and get a more detailed assessment.

As a young, healthy, vibrant and energetic woman, we were stunned when she was diagnosed with young onset dementia—she was only 57! After the shock wore off, we put one foot in front of the other and just kept going with our lives. Me and the kids agreed to stay connected with each other about any changes we were seeing, any concerns. The losses were slow but they kept coming. She didn't feel safe at home alone. She stopped cooking.



So I picked up the phone and called the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia. I thought maybe there was someone I could talk to, at some point. And I remember this bright voice on the phone said, "Sure, come on in, how's tomorrow?"

It is such a good feeling to reach out for help and have someone see you, pay attention to you and know where you are at. From the very first conversation with the Society, we felt heard. With their help, we learned that while there is so much we cannot control about this illness, we can make plans and adjust as we go, with excellent care and love every step of the way from the Society.



Lots of times, even still, we don't know what to do. But we do know who to ask—and we trust them completely. The stuff that the Society has guided us through we never would have figured out on our own. There's no way of finding your way if you don't know where to look.

In the early days of our journey, as they called it, I remember they laid out everything we might experience—from diagnosis to changes we should expect to financial planning, you know, our wills and estates. At times I felt like we were getting ahead of ourselves, but now I know where to find everything I need and I just don't worry about it anymore. I can't imagine where we would be without the Society.



How's Colina today? Well, we went out for a walk. It was short and slow and she took tiny steps, but there is still no one else in Nova Scotia or here on earth I'd rather walk with. Colina loves the Coffee and Conversation program at the Society, and also the Artful Afternoon. **She's always been creative—she's a very gifted artist and she looks forward to that program every month.** I get support from the caregivers' groups and I also just pick up the phone and call and ask for what I need or think or feel right then. Right now I'm focused on respite care. With the Society's help I found home care resources and I've got a respite break coming up.

Here's the thing about the Society. They told us on the first day that this is a journey. That really stuck with me. And no matter how this journey changes, I know where I can get answers, and it's from them. I can't foresee the challenges that are around the corner, but they can—and they adjust their support. This illness changes very quickly and it's so comforting to know that they are with me, for every step of this journey.

EMILY'S Thoughts

I'm so proud of my Dad and I'm amazed every day at what he has been able to do. The care he provides for my mom is remarkable.

You never think about or prepare for this—we never expected anything like this. And my brothers and I find strength and confidence in knowing that when my Dad has questions or needs support, the Society is always there for him. There is no better feeling than knowing that the Society understands this disease and can give him what he needs to help Mom.

Everyone there is so empathetic, so compassionate, so kind. Even just the other day we ran into Linda, one of the staff, here in town and the way she interacted with mom was incredible. She looked directly in her eyes, wrapped her up tight in her arms in a huge hug, and asked yes or no questions so Mom could respond and engage. Everyone at the Society just understands, and Mom just lights up after her interactions with them.



Société Alzheimer Society

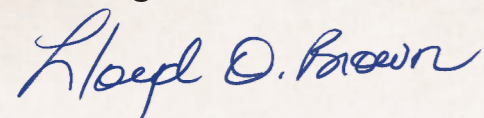
NOVA SCOTIA

You are part of this story. You are part of the story of Colina and David. And you are part of the story of so many families here in Nova Scotia. Thank you for your kind and caring support of the Alzheimer Society.

Every family's journey with dementia is different. And we are here, every single day, to respond to the unique needs of every family, in that moment and for their whole journey.

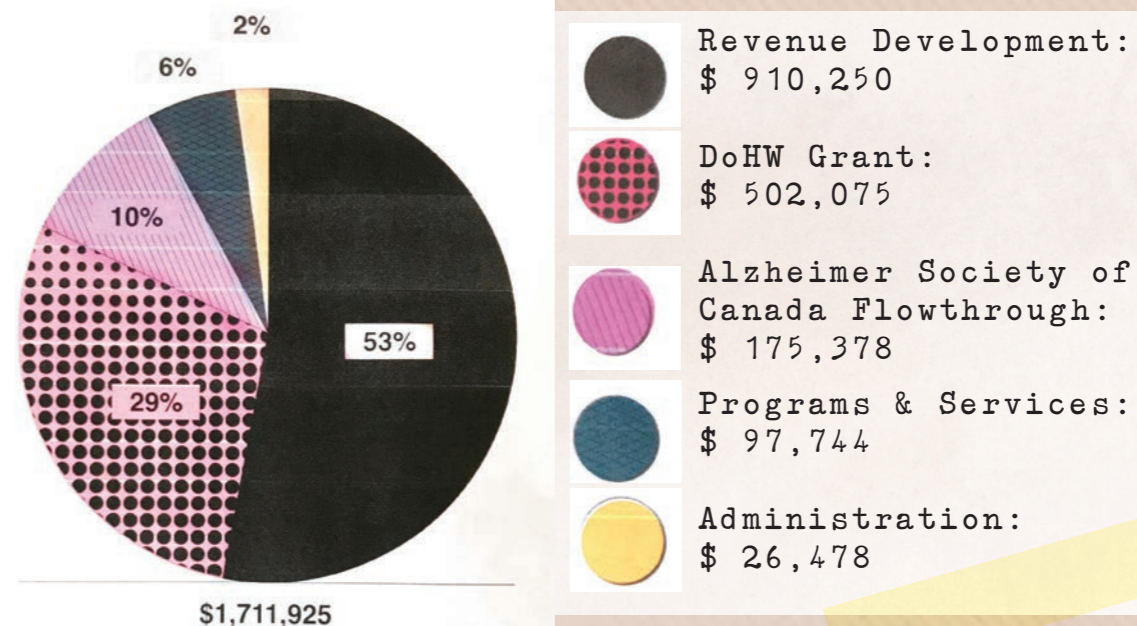
Thanks to you, we are proud to provide support, care, love and help to the 17,000 Nova Scotians living with dementia and their families. Your support ensures that from the very first call to our InfoLine, through our range of services for people living with dementia and their families, we are here at every stage in their journey. Thank you for your help and compassion.

With gratitude,

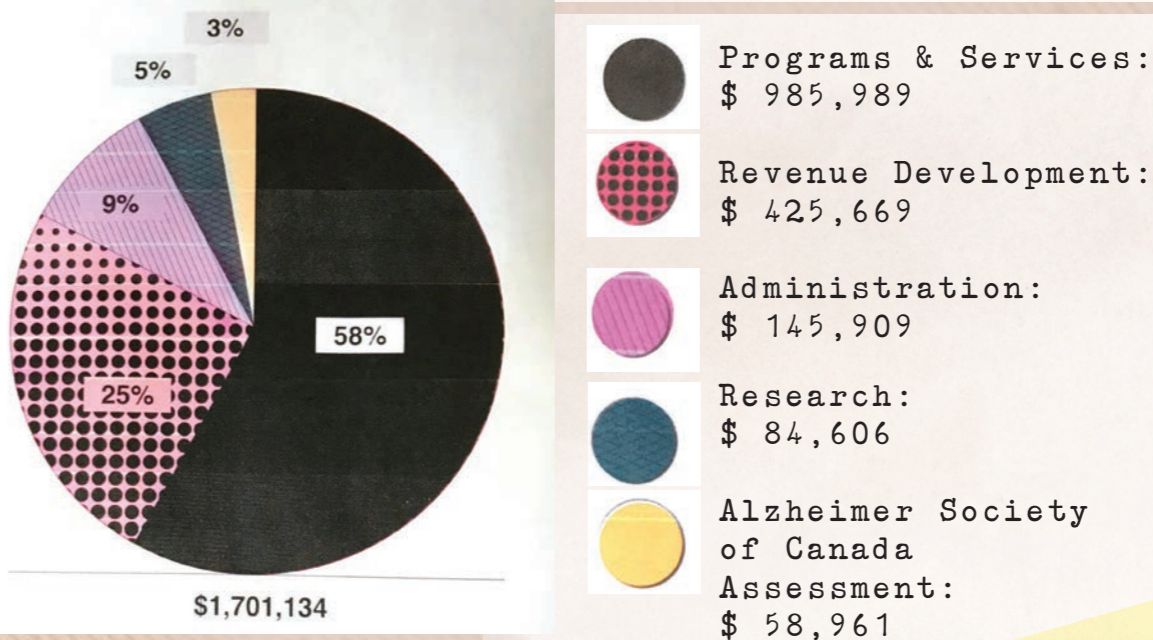


Executive Director
 lloyd.brown@asns.ca
 902-422-7961 ext. 223
 112-2719 Gladstone Street
 Halifax, NS B3K 4W6

REVENUE 2017-2018 Fiscal Actual = \$ 1,711,925



EXPENSES 2017-2018 Fiscal Actual = \$ 1,701,134



Dementia in Nova Scotia

940,000 people live in Nova Scotia

404,000 of those are 50 years or older

17,000 Nova Scotians live with dementia
That number doesn't take into account the partners in care, family members and friends who also face the realities of the disease every day. That number--the number of people who need the Society's programs, services and education opportunities--will increase every year.

People living with dementia attended **661 hours of programming designed for them**

Family caregivers attended **6,124 hours of group education and support**

Through our InfoLine service we provided **62,932 minutes of one-on-one phone or in-person support**

Over the last 3 years, we averaged **888 new clients per year**

It's not an old person's disease. Mom was only 57, and is turning 63 this year. It can affect so many different people. When you support the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia, you're supporting a wide variety of people, and growing. Everyone deserves help. - Emily



Our dementia journey has not stopped our family's adventures. Colina and I still love to travel, with and without the kids.

Last winter Colina and I went to Dominican Republic. Her birthday is Canada Day, so last year we hopped in the car and drove to Ottawa. Just a few months ago the whole family went to Mexico.

The gang at the Society both shake their heads in disbelief and tell us we're an inspiration to others. I always say that it takes determination, coordination and planning, but it's possible.

Anything is possible when you're with people you love and you have the support of people like the Alzheimers Society.

