

# FROM ACADEMIC SYMPOSIA TO LOCAL YOUTH INITIATIVES: THE SPARE A THOUGHT FOR DEMENTIA CAMPAIGN

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## INTRO

For many young carers of persons with dementia, there is a lack of personal, emotional, and mental support, leading them to feel isolated and frustrated.

Based out of Ryerson University, the Spare a Thought for Dementia campaign was created to raise awareness of the impacts of dementia through real, lived experiences. This outreach program provides young carers with the opportunity to learn about dementia through the lens of other youth in the role of a care provider for a person with dementia.

The campaign is a direct outcome of a two-day, academic workshop called the Youth Dementia Awareness Symposium. This poster outlines the journey from sharing, co-creating, and mobilizing knowledge from an academic environment into local communities where the next generation of young carers live, socialize, and learn.

## QUESTIONS

1. In what ways can the research community mobilize knowledge and information about dementia to broader public spheres?
2. What roles do youth, educators, and community organizations have in creating more awareness about the disease?
3. How might we collaborate with community members, organizations, and youth to promote knowledge?

**“ Invisible carer is a term used to describe youths and young adults who are faced with the challenge of caring for persons with dementia. ”**

The general public often faces a misconception that dementia and Alzheimer's disease only happens to older people, when in reality, it can affect individuals in early adulthood.

**“ Spare a Thought for Dementia envisions a world where youth are empowered to become care partners and advocates for persons living with dementia. ”**



## Youth Dementia Awareness Symposium

The Youth Dementia Awareness Symposium was a two-day international event that took place at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada in October 2016. This symposium brought together various stakeholders, including high school students and other youth dementia leaders, persons living with dementia and/or their carers, researchers, practitioners, and NGO representatives, from across the world. 60 people participated in the symposium, with half of the attendees being 25 years old or under.

The results of the symposium included the following:

1. Exchanged and generated knowledge related to youth, popular, and cultural representations of dementia, and academic knowledge mobilization;
2. Identified gaps in existing knowledge and reached a consensus about actions moving forward;
3. Established collaborative cross-sectorial and intergenerational networks and partnerships to put knowledge into action; and
4. Disseminated key messages to increase youth awareness of dementia.

Photography, live stream video recordings, three arts-based workshop collaborative pieces, attendee workshop collaborative arts piece, Storify, Twitter, and Facebook were also generated which promoted knowledge mobilization of symposium.



## Spare A Thought For Dementia

The Spare a Thought for Dementia campaign's primary goal is to develop partnerships with communities, schools, and other stakeholders to discuss needs, engagement opportunities, and ways to disseminate knowledge. This will help youth and young carers navigate through society by providing strategies on how to deal with the anxiety, uncertainty, and other challenging emotions that may arise when encountering or caring for persons living with dementia.

The Spare a Thought for Dementia campaign was created by the Thoughts for Dementia Collaborative, which is a group of researchers, care partners, community advocates, and students.

Potential Audience

Thoughts For Dementia Collaborative

## SPARE A THOUGHT FOR DEMENTIA

Website as a portal of activity, resources, and inspiration with the goal of preparing the next generation of young carers.

[www.ThoughtsForDementia.ca](http://www.ThoughtsForDementia.ca)

### LOCAL EVENTS

To engage youth "on-the-ground" and in classrooms, and to promote collaborations with educators

### SOCIAL & DIGITAL MEDIA

To maximize reach and visibility regardless of geographic location, and to encourage "micro-commitment" to the campaign.

## KEY LESSONS

### Successes

- Established one strong connection with a youth-led Alzheimer's club in a high school to add youth perspectives
- Connected with community care partners to expand campaign awareness, skillsets, and ideas
- Developed a "Thoughts for Dementia Collaborative" that generates a free-flow of ideas and feedback from multiple perspectives
- Begun to realize progress and outputs including website, social media channels, and promotional media

### Challenges

- Engagement with schools proved to be difficult on multiple levels, thereby limiting outreach efforts
- Initial connections with the audience through social media on an individual and personal level requires a lot of effort
- Finding relevant and engaging content for social media due to limited research/support on youth and dementia
- Navigating interests, skills, and expertise from community collaborators (Thoughts for Dementia Collaborative)

## GET INVOLVED

Participate in the **MY STORY YOUR STORY** campaign by taking to Instagram or Snapchat and spare your thoughts on dementia. Tag **#T4Dementia** to add to the growing collection.



### » EXPLORE

Discover local initiatives and fresh ideas on how you can impact change in the dementia community.

### » SHARE

Inspire others by sharing your experiences, initiatives, and thoughts about how to improve community.

### » ENGAGE

Ready to make change? Contact us to find out more.



[www.ThoughtsForDementia.com](http://www.ThoughtsForDementia.com)

#T4Dementia

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Spare a Thought for Dementia Campaign is a project led by the Thoughts for Dementia Collaborative, consisting of researchers from Ryerson University, care partners, and advocates in the dementia community. The project is funded in part by Ryerson University and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Partners of the Youth Dementia Awareness Symposium include Alzheimer's Disease International and AGE-WELL NCE Inc.