



Encouraging togetherness and learning in dementia care

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEMENTIA PLAY READING AT OLD DOWNTON LODGE

Dementia Pathfinders Community Interest Company are hosting this special event

A performed play reading of *Don't Leave Me Now*, exploring the impact of early onset dementia, is taking place at Old Downton Lodge in Ludlow on 30th June 2015 as part of an initiative to raise awareness of dementia in Shropshire.

Don't Leave Me Now is inspired by the real-life stories of two families affected by early onset dementia: Professor Rachael Dixey, who cared for her partner for seven years, and Cindy Toulman who visited her husband in his care home every day for ten years.

Playwright Brian Daniels, Artistic Director of New End Theatre Beyond, uses the stories to create a documentary-style production which highlights the emotions, challenges and dilemmas experienced by those affected by dementia.

Dementia Pathfinders is hosting *Don't Leave Me Now* to raise awareness of dementia amongst the health and social care workforce and in local communities across Shropshire.

Despite dementia being thought of as a condition that mostly affects older people, it's estimated that more than 40,000 people in the UK are living with early onset dementia – meaning a diagnosis under the age of 65. A dementia diagnosis for a person of working age causes a multitude of emotional and practical difficulties both for the patient and their family and friends.

Barbara Stephens, Chief Executive of Dementia Pathfinders, says: "Dementia is a complex condition and a diagnosis at a young age has life-changing consequences. Families are faced with making changes, over time, to their future expectations and plans. Support organisations and communities play a vital role helping people living with dementia to engage in fulfilling and meaningful activities. By hosting *Don't Leave Me Now*, we hope that local residents, community organisations and health and social care professionals will join us in our efforts to promote dementia friendly approaches and greater recognition of the issues that face people with early onset dementia".

Brian Daniels, Chief Executive and Artistic Director of New End Theatre Beyond, says: "I was drawn to begin writing a play about early onset dementia after reading the journal of my good friend Professor Rachael Dixey who had nursed her partner, Irene Heron through seven years of early onset dementia. I was interested to explore the impact on family life and the point at which the often heart breaking decision must be made about 'letting go' of a loved one into the care system. I quickly realised that dementia can have its lighter moments too and that the challenges faced by families can make them stronger and more insightful into a human condition that can affect any of us at any time".

The performance will take place on 30th June 2015 at 7pm at Old Downton Lodge in Ludlow. The reading will be performed by a cast of five professional actors and directed by Jeni Draper. The performance will be followed by a facilitated discussion and Q&A with the cast and director, including questions from the audience.

Tickets are £10 and can be ordered by calling 0845 257 2260 or by email info@dementiathfinders.org or online <https://evening-play-reading-ludlow.eventbrite.co.uk>

Don't Leave Me Now

Date: Tuesday 30th June 2015

Time: 7pm

Venue: Old Downton Lodge, Downton on the Rock, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 2HU

Tickets: 0845 257 2260 / info@dementiathfinders.org / <https://evening-play-reading-ludlow.eventbrite.co.uk>

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Contact

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Notes to editor

About Dementia Pathfinders

DEMENTIA PATHFINDERS is a not-for-profit social enterprise providing education and training for the health and social care workforce and delivering therapeutic and social support for people with dementia and their families. The company seeks to build partnerships with individuals and groups to create better understanding of the needs and aspirations of people with dementia. Partners include academic institutions, independent providers of services and public sector organisations in health and social care. Dementia Pathfinders uses networks to publicise pioneering work delivered at local level with the aim of sharing best practice and promoting innovation.

About New End Theatre Beyond

NEW END THEATRE BEYOND is the ongoing production arm of Hampstead's New End Theatre where Brian Daniels was its Artistic Director from 1997 to 2011. During that time Brian produced more than 200 new plays, mostly World or UK premieres. He has worked with many writers and performers including Steven Berkoff, Maureen Lipman, Richard Dreyfuss, Susannah York, Prunella Scales, Fenella Fielding, Paula Wilcox and Jerry Hall. Since 2011 New End Theatre Beyond has continued to produce work including 'The Good and the True' (London, Prague, touring and off-Broadway, New York, Australia and New Zealand). 'Jerusalem Tango' by Pat Rowe (Leeds and London), Churchill by Tony Tortora (Leeds and London) 'Where's Your Mama Gone?' (Leeds and London). The propensity of the NEW END THEATRE BEYOND is towards issue led plays relating to contemporary social concerns. The company is a non-profit making entity.