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**8th Annual Virginia Yoga Week and Be Well Virginia Campaign  
to support the Alzheimer's Association The Longest Day initiative**

*Week-long event to educate the community on the benefits of yoga for all,  
including people with dementia and their caregivers*

Alexandria, VA – May 5, 2015 – The organizers of [Virginia Yoga Week 2015](#) and Be Well Virginia have announced that the Alzheimer's Association event [The Longest Day](#) will be part of this year's charity-directed initiative - which kicks off June 14 - to help promote yoga throughout Virginia and bring attention to yoga as a therapeutic option for Alzheimer's patients and their caregivers. The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research.

Virginia Yoga Week 2015 and Be Well Virginia begins Sunday, June 14 at the Love Your Body festival in Reston Town Center, which offers a unique opportunity for people of all ages and fitness levels to experience yoga, get information about various yoga studios, and experience food vendors, local crafts, and other activities. As part of Virginia Yoga Week yoga studios throughout the state will offer free yoga classes and \$5.00 charity-directed classes that will benefit various local and national organizations including [Carpenter's Shelter](#) and [YoKid](#) in Alexandria, VA, and the [Alzheimer's Association](#). The last day of Virginia Yoga Week will celebrate the United Nation's declaration of International Day of Yoga on June 21st. As the beginning of the summer solstice this date has global significance for the yoga community, and has been marked as a day of recognition by the Alzheimer's Association with [The Longest Day](#) campaign.

This year's collaboration with the Alzheimer's Association represents continued widespread recognition of yoga as a form of exercise and relaxation therapy that offers demonstrated health benefits for all populations, including those with chronic illness. Alzheimer's is a progressive disease which has no cure. It is the most common form of dementia and affects more than 5 million Americans.

"The Longest Day is a team event to raise funds and awareness for the Alzheimer's Association. Held annually on the summer solstice, the duration of this sunrise-to-sunset event symbolizes the challenging journey of those living with the disease and their caregivers," said Cindy Schelhorn, senior director of communications and marketing with the Alzheimer's Association National Capital Area Chapter. "Teams are encouraged to create their own experience as they fundraise and participate in an activity they love to honor someone facing the disease. We are excited to welcome Be Well Virginia as a team in this year's The Longest Day. Research shows there are lifestyle habits that people can adopt to maintain or potentially improve their health as they age. Physical activity is a valuable part of any overall body wellness plan and is associated with a lower risk of cognitive decline. We encourage the community to come out and enjoy a day of yoga while they help in the fight against Alzheimer's."

The benefits of yoga and meditation for people with Alzheimer's and related dementias has been demonstrated in recent studies which suggest these activities can help prevent or even reverse memory loss. One of these was a small study conducted in the U.K. with people with dementia and caregivers, and published in the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*. The study participants reported feeling more social, more relaxed, and exhibited greater overall positive attitudes following yoga and meditation sessions.

"Over the past several years while teaching at local senior living communities I've seen firsthand the benefits of yoga for increasing strength, balance and cognitive function in seniors," says Margaret Townsend, founder of Virginia Yoga Week and the owner of River's Edge Yoga in Alexandria, VA. "My experience working with this population, seeing my godfather suffer with dementia and my godmother's struggle to care for him, motivated my involvement with the Alzheimer's Association. This prompted my commitment to initiate Care for the Caregivers, a campaign to bring yoga teachers together to donate yoga classes to caregiver support groups."

For more information about Virginia Yoga Week 2015 and Be Well Virginia, visit [www.virginiayogaweek.org](http://www.virginiayogaweek.org).

### **About the Alzheimer's Association**

The mission of the Alzheimer's Association is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. For more information, visit [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) or call 800.272.3900.