

2009 ALS WALK4Life – Opening Ceremony

Why I Walk4Life

Sandy Falco, Keith's Krew:

- Thinking of how hard this is on my Mom, Proud of my Dad for being so strong. Realizing what and how much it takes to fight ALS. – Chris Schoen

- For JOY: The walk brings joy to friends and family who come together for the purpose of research and support. – Mike Schoen

- Not only do I walk for my parents, I walk for all those that are going through the same struggles that my family is. Wanting to help find a cure and raise money to help the Foundation that has helped our family in so many ways and continues to do so. – Kim Schoen-Repetowski

- My inspiration to walk is Keith Schoen and his angel on earth, Peggy Schoen and my goal – with our team and all the other walkers – is to try to conquer ALS and to make the lives of these patients and their families better.

Gloria Sidell, Team Go For Glow:

I walk because I care, I walk because I can AND I walk because I have ALS.

I have seen what ALS can do to the body and am now experiencing it first hand. I've only been diagnosed 6 months ago and have already lost much of my ability to speak. Today you will see others who cannot walk or use their arms or like me cannot talk.

I walk because I care, I walk because I still can – AND I have ALS.

Gerry Weiler, Day Walkers

A few years ago, my brother Dan was having problems with his leg. He saw five orthopedic surgeons and two neurologists before seeing Dr. Siddique at Northwestern earlier this year and was then diagnosed with ALS. Dan's positive attitude in facing this disease is inspirational and gives me hope that things will be okay.

So I, and our team of 50, walk not only to support and honor Dan Weiler – our brother, husband, father, grandfather, uncle, business partner, attorney, neighbor and friend – but for ALL patients with ALS.

Katie Cotter, Team Jean

I walk to honor the best woman I know – my mom – Jean Cotter.

After learning of her diagnosis on May 29, 2008, my mom started her courageous fight against the disease. While there are days everyone around her feels powerless, we find strength in my mom's ability to stay positive.

This Walk lets everyone show her how much she is loved and supported. It gives our family and friends the opportunity to share in my mom's kind spirit. We walk to strike out ALS. We walk for my mom. I walk because she is the best.

Steve Heronemus, beLLeVE with Steve

There are those who would say "these are busy times; we can't expect people to participate in an event like this" and yet you are here, proving there is always time to love someone else.

And for today, there is hope.

And some would doubt our generosity in these troubled economic times, yet the outpouring of generosity here has exceeded all our expectations.

And for today, there is hope.

Some would say there is nothing we can do for ALS, yet today we provide funding to world-class researchers, clinicians, nurses, social workers, care coordinators and support people providing today's care and unlocking tomorrow's secrets.

And for today, there is hope.

There is an empty sidewalk ahead of us today, reminding us, some would say, that ALS is a cold and lonely journey, but I look around at a sea of relatives and friends, old and new, with joy in their faces, anxious to overwhelm that lonely journey with love, care and happiness.

And for today, there is hope.

And so I give thanks to all of you, for your love, support and generosity. But mainly for your courage in accompanying me and my family in this journey, helping us to reclaim and proclaim this precious gift -

that for today, there is hope.