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HopeHealth Walk For Alzheimer's Draws Hundreds

By KAREN B. HUNTER May 15, 2016

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The Lemonade Strollers, a small team of walkers from Falmouth participating in Sunday's HopeHealth Walk for Alzheimer's, were easy to identify in their yellow tops as they arrived at Scusset Beach State Reservation in Sandwich. "We chose the name Lemonade Strollers because of the saying, 'When life gives you lemons, make lemonade,'" said Fran L. Lightsom, a founding member of the team. "This is our third Alzheimer's Walk. When we discovered that almost nobody else was wearing yellow shirts and it was easy to find each other in the crowd, we knew we had a good thing," Ms. Lightsom said.

The HopeHealth Walk for Alzheimer's, formerly called Miles of Memories, is the principal fundraiser for Hope Health Dementia and Alzheimer's Services and has been a tradition for 23 years, held rain or shine. The walk is a pledge-based fundraising event that draws hundreds of walkers, many grouped into teams represented by adults, children, babies in strollers, dogs, people with Alzheimer's disease, their caregivers, and family members walking in memory of loved ones.

Myriad team shirt colors filled a large tent and spilled out into the field around it as walkers signed in at the registration desk on Sunday, May 15, at 9 AM under sunny skies.

Barbara's Girls were dressed in purple shirts with matching, hand-knit, purple scarves walking in memory of their mother, who died in March 2015.

A team in green had the words, "Got Hope?" on the back of their shirts. Another team's shirts read, "Hope Starts Here." The Forget Me Nots light blue team, started by four sisters from Yarmouth/Dennis, had 24 walkers and raised \$2,500 in memory of their mother, who died in November of 2015.

Alzheimer's disease is a fatal, degenerative disease of the brain that slowly diminishes a person's ability to reason, remember, respond to the environment, and carry out the most basic tasks. Every 69 seconds another American develops Alzheimer's disease. It is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and the fifth leading cause of death for those 65 and older. More than 325,000 people in Massachusetts are unpaid caregivers caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease.

During registration at Sunday's walk, organizers thanked donors and corporate sponsors, and speakers

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addressed the crowd briefly to tell their personal Alzheimer's stories. Among them was Greg O'Brien, author of the book "On Pluto, Inside the Mind of Alzheimer's" and the subject of a short film called "A Place Called Pluto."

Mr. O'Brien was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's in 2009 and wrote "On Pluto" to chronicle his own progression of the disease. He has been quoted as saying, "Alzheimer's is the only disease in the nation's top ten that cannot be prevented, cured, or slowed...the challenge is that few want to embrace this taboo of a disease." The HopeHealth Walk for Alzheimer's not only raises money but also helps raise awareness of the disease.

"The most important thing to know is that the money we raise goes directly back into the community to help families," said Suzanne Faith, RN, senior director of Hope Dementia and Alzheimer's Services. "We really appreciate everyone's support."

The LaTanzi, Spaulding & Landreth, PC team from Orleans had 15 walkers and has raised \$1,200 so far. "People have been really generous," said Ingrid A. Epperly of the team.

The Miracles in Fitness team from Sagamore had 107 walkers in bright blue shirts. "We've raised \$15,720!" said team leader JoAnne Papi.

The Lemonade Strollers were a small but hearty group, notable for the yellow shirts and for having almost as many dogs as people walking with the team in support and in memory of family members with Alzheimer's disease. They were easy to identify as the walk began and teams headed out for the three-mile trek along the canal.

Hope Dementia and Alzheimer's Services' mission is to provide information, education, and support for people with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia and the families and professionals who care for them. Their website is at www.hopehealthco.org.

Correction May 16, 2016: The leader of the Miracles in Fitness team is JoAnne Papi.



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MAY 16 St. John's Episcopal Church 12th Annual Golf Tournament
Monday, May 16 | 8:00 am

MAY 16 Juried Photography
Monday, May 16 | 9:00 am

MAY 16 Osteo Prevention
Monday, May 16 | 9:15 am

MAY 16 'Sing-In' With The Choraliers
Monday, May 16 | 9:30 am

MAY 16 From The Board Room
Monday, May 16 | 9:30 am

MAY 16 'South Cape Artists: The Language of Flowers'
Monday, May 16 | 10:00 am

MAY 16 Line Dancing
Monday, May 16 | 11:00 am

MAY 16 Zuma Gold @ Gus Canty Community Center
Monday, May 16 | 11:00 am

MAY 16 Brewery Tours
Monday, May 16 | 11:00 am

MAY 16 Zumba Gold
Monday, May 16 | 11:00 am

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