

Walk to End ALS returning to Shelburne this weekend

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Family members of Cathi Snider, a local woman who passed away three years ago, will be sporting the colour purple and walking through Shelburne in her honour as they take part in the 4th annual Walk to End ALS this weekend.

"There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about my sister," said Debra Bettio, one of Cathi's three sisters. "It's a moment to take an hour out of your day to help a cause that has devastated so many families. Even though Shelburne is a small town, there have been a lot of other families affected by this disease and the community needs to know that there is support available."

A resident of Shelburne, Cathi Snider, was diagnosed with ALS in August of 2019 after experiencing a fall, undergoing physiotherapy and several tests in the hospital. After battling the disease for six months, Cathi passed away in February 2020.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is a terminal, progressive nervous system disease that affects the nerves in the brain and spinal cord, causing a loss of muscle control.

The ALS Society of Canada said an estimated 3,000 Canadians live with ALS. Approximately 1,000 Canadians will learn they have ALS each year, while another 1,000 will die from the disease. Nine out of 10 people diagnosed with ALS do not have a family history of the disease.

Last year, the Walk to End ALS marked a significant moment for Cathi's family members, as it was the first time the family was able to come together as one unit on the walk. The event was also opened for community members to take part in.

"It means a lot to me because we did have a lot of people in Shelburne help us," said Marci Fegan, daughter to Cathi. "ALS is more prevalent than we realize and it's important that we have other people that we can relate to and talk to, and to support each other."

The Walk to End ALS is a Canada-wide volunteer-led fundraiser, the largest for ALS Societies in the country, which supports the 3,000 families living with ALS while honouring those who have passed away from the disease.

As part of the Walk to End ALS, funds are being raised to go towards research on ALS and community-based support. Team Cathi has a fundraising goal of \$1,500 and has so far raised just over \$500.

In the three years since they started the local Walk to End ALS, Cathi's family has raised roughly \$10,000 for the initiative.

"A big thing for us was the support the ALS community gave us when my mom got diagnosed. They helped with so many things and that is a part of why we want to continue to help out. It's such a devastating disease and you need to have people to support you through it," said Fegan.

While family members will be walking in honour of Cathi, the local Walk to End ALS is also open for the community to participate and for others who wish to walk in memory of their own loved ones.

"Anyone who has been affected that would like to honour a loved one, it would be great if they could come out," said Bettio.

The 4th annual Walk to End ALS in memory of Cathi Snider will take place on June 11. The walk will consist of a 5-kilometre route with various points, where participants can cut off for a shorter walk. The walk will begin at Dufferin Oaks in Shelburne at 9:30 a.m.

Those interested in making a donation to the ALS Society of Canada can do so by visiting:
alscanadawalktoendals.als.ca/ontario/team-cathi