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Fifth Annual ALS Walk returning to Shelburne

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For a fifth year in a row, the family members of Cathi Snider, a local woman who passed away from ALS, will be sporting the colour purple and walking through Shelburne in her honour as they raise awareness for the disease.

?There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about my sister. She was a special person to all of us and there was nothing more important to her than her family,? said Debra Bettio, one of Cathi's three sisters. ?[The walk] is a sign of respect for my sister, to acknowledge what she had to go through. I hope by doing this walk and bringing awareness that maybe it will help other people navigate and hopefully avoid other families having this kind of loss.?

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 4,000 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

This year will mark the fifth year that Cathi's family members have taken up the challenge to walk in her memory while also raising awareness and funds to fight the disease.

?It's actually shocking that she's been gone this long already,? said Marci Fegan, daughter of Cathi. ?For us, we're going to be doing something to raise funds for ALS for our whole lives.?

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 at the time of print has surpassed their goal - $1,552.

Since they started the local Walk the End ALS, Cathi's family has raised roughly $14,000 for the ALS initiative.

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.

?It was hard for me to go public with it because it's so emotional, but I fell like we need to because there's other people grieving too,? said Fegan. ?Whether you know a family member or community member that has ALS or even if you don't, it's important to recognize that this disease is in Canada and it really is harmful for the people who have it.?

The 5th Annual Walk to End ALS in memory of Cathi Snider will take place on June 9. The walk will consist of a 5-kilometre route with various points, where participants can cut off for a short 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: https://alscanadawalktoendals.als.ca/ontario/team-cathi.