

Why I Walk by Kevan Atteberry

This is my beautiful wife, Teri. She was diagnosed in March 2008 with younger-onset Alzheimer's disease. We were stunned. Her diagnosis was a sobering and confusing answer to her ever-increasing memory and cognitive issues that had caused her to lose a series of jobs.



She was only 52.

How could she have Alzheimer's at 52? Up until that moment, Alzheimer's was nothing more than a punch line to any number of silly jokes made at the expense of somebody forgetting something.

Her diagnosis has become a huge part of our lives.

Teri is a wonderful and high-spirited person. She loves to laugh and be among friends. She is very active and still plays soccer, but is challenged and confused by simple tasks. She also has increasing difficulty finding and forming words. Watching this happen to her is hard, but because of her outgoing, cheerful and social nature, seeing her struggle this way breaks my heart.

I often wonder how this could have happened to Teri, to me, to us, to our family.

I was angry without anybody to be angry at.

I was angry about being so selfish.

We found a doctor and a clinic that helped show us the way. They pointed us to the Alzheimer's Association. Living WITH Alzheimer's and living with someone who HAS Alzheimer's both have their challenges, their hurdles, their successes and failures. We've both been attending support groups through the Alzheimer's Association for nearly two years—mine, a younger-onset caregivers' support group, and Teri's, a younger-onset patients' support group.



Lennon, Teri, Kevan and Rio Atteberry at Pacific Northwest Walk 2010

My group has provided a wealth of information, concern and care from some pretty remarkable people. Each caregiver's loved one is in various stages of the disease. We learn and share and validate new

things at every meeting. It is a comfort of sorts to know that I am not alone in this and to have insight on what may be coming next. And to be able to find or give consolation and support when it is most needed.

I get to the Chapter office early to pick Teri up after her support group and nearly always hear much laughter and frivolity coming from the conference room. This warms my heart.

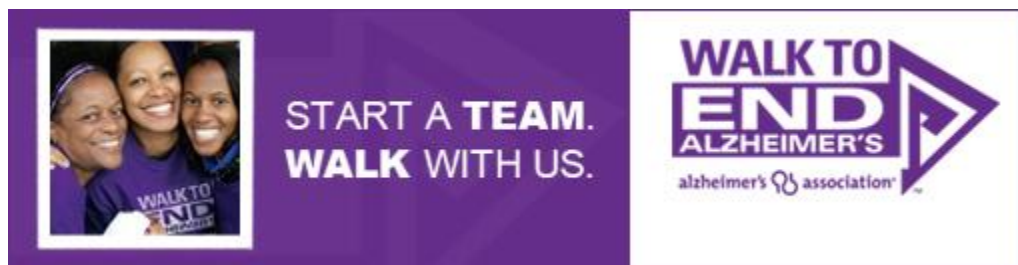
This Chapter has been a SAFE haven to both Teri and me, and at no cost. I wanted to give back something and last September participated in their Walk to End Alzheimer's Seattle Walk.

Surprisingly, I was the largest individual fundraiser. Or maybe not that surprising; after all, Teri and I are very fortunate to be surrounded by many wonderful, caring and generous people. Each and every one of them was happy to participate. Some had their lives touched by the disease previously, but all have been touched now. As we get older, I can only imagine that other people in our lives will be diagnosed with Alzheimer's. With help from the Alzheimer's Association, we can make a difference by keeping the quest for a cure at the forefront.

I will continue to donate time and money and stay as involved as I can. It'd mean the world to both Teri and me if you could do the same. Please join our family, friends, supporters and others by joining or starting a Walk to End Alzheimer's team.

Peace,
Kevan Atteberry

Kevan Atteberry is an artist, illustrator, animator and all around fun guy. He and wife Teri have two grown sons, Lennon and Rio. Everyone in the family is engaging in outreach and building awareness about Alzheimer's disease. You can see Kevan's work at www.oddisgood.com



www.alz.org/walk