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A Rite of Passage Inspires Teen to Raise Funds

Portland, OR—Sophia Lang, a thirteen-year-old Northeast Portland resident opted to forgo gifts at her Bat Mitzvah this summer, asking for donations to her Alzheimer's Memory Walk team instead.

Lang studied for over two years to prepare for her Bat Mitzvah, attending weekly classes and working with a private Hebrew tutor. After leading over seventy members of the Shir Tikvah congregation through Torah readings, Lang and her friends celebrated her rite of passage at Tryon Creek Park. The after party boasted traditional teenage fare—fun drinks, eats, and a D.J. spinning Lady Gaga hits. The one exception to Lang's party was the lack of a gift table piled high with presents.

When Lang, who attends Sunnyside Environmental School, sent out invitations, she invited guests to donate and join her Memory Walk Team. Lang's maternal grandmother, Vel Leonard, suffers from Alzheimer's and resides at a local long term care facility. Lang has watched her grandmother deteriorate over the last six years and witnessed the devastating affects the disease has had on her entire family. "It's really sad when I go visit her," said Lang. "Most of the time she's pretty cheery, but she wanders so they have to lock the door behind us when we leave."

Lang's guests raised over \$1000 the day of her Bat Mitzvah and she's still raising funds. This will be the third year that Lang and her family have participated in Memory Walk and Lang's second year as a team captain. She anticipates that forty people will join them on the day of the walk.

It is estimated that someone in America develops Alzheimer's disease every 70 seconds. By mid-century someone will develop Alzheimer's disease every 33 seconds.

"There has never been a greater need for Portland citizens to join in the fight against Alzheimer's disease by participating in Memory Walk," said Judy McKellar, Executive Director of the Alzheimer's Association. "As many as 5.3 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease and funds raised will provide support services to the 76,000 Oregon residents living with Alzheimer's, while also contributing to critically needed research."

The Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk is an empowering event that gives participants an opportunity to be *Champions* and take action in the fight against Alzheimer's. The 18th Annual Portland Memory Walk takes place on Sunday, September 27th at 9:00am in Pioneer Courthouse Square. Participants can register online at www.mw09.kintera.org/pdx or call 503-4160-0201.

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