

Why We Need to Tackle Alzheimer's

By Catherine Marshall

Alzheimer's is a disease that affects millions of people all over the world, increasing at rapid numbers daily. In the past year the disease was introduced to my family and me. It is something that I am learning more about every day. The more I learn, the more I am inspired to help fight a disease that eats away at not only our memory but also our memories.

My father passed away in September of 2007, about 6 months after, my brothers and I started to notice that our Mom was acting very different. We started seeking help from Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Internists, etc. because we thought it might be depression or stress. After she showed no improvement, we went and saw a Neurologist. It wasn't until after a year of tests, blood work, cat scans, and so on that we started to get answers. August 17, 2009, my Mom was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's at age 62. I had lost my Dad only two years earlier, and now I was starting down a scary, unfamiliar path towards the loss of my Mom, and that is when I decided I wasn't going to just watch my Mom die, but I was going to try and do whatever I could to make a difference. I am fully aware that I cannot change the outcome of Alzheimer's by myself, but I do believe that when people come together, we can be loud, strong, and very powerful! Together we can at least *try* to make a difference and slowly find the answers to beat this disease, not only for the ones dealing with it NOW but the millions of people that will deal with it some time in their futures, and that is why I decided to participate in the Alzheimer's Association Blondes vs. Brunettes Powder Puff Game. This Game is not only going to be for a great cause, it is going to be great fun too. We get to raise money AND play football, and on top of that I get to meet hundreds of individuals who know exactly what I am going through that I will learn from, grow from, and build long lasting relations with. What more could I ask for?

When I signed up for the 2010 Blondes vs. Brunettes game, I was informed that the minimum requirement of \$250 that each player had to raise in order to participate, and I thought, "\$250? If I am going to raise money, I'm going to try to raise A LOT of money!" My goal for this year is hefty and thanks to all of my parents supportive friends, my family, my co-workers, individuals I have met through support groups, my friends, my friend's friends, my friend's parents, their friends, and more I really believe it is not "too hefty" to hit! So to all my supporters who are reading this, get the word out there and donate, donate, donate! Every donation big or small can make a difference. As of now, no one has found a cure for Alzheimer's, but it doesn't mean there is not one out there. What we need are individuals to learn about Alzheimer's and its' severity, teach others about it, and help give and get support to advance research into prevention, treatments, and eventually a CURE.

There are no easy things to say to families dealing with Alzheimer's and there is no easy way to watch an individual you love slowly fade away from a disease we still don't know a lot about. The few things that have helped me, is to take it one day at a time; try not to miss who your loved one "used to be" that is fighting Alzheimer's, rather be thankful for them in this one day at this one moment; and it's a long, rough, scary disease that is different for *every single* person diagnosed, so don't be afraid to lean on your family, friends, and community when you need to be picked up.

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