

Daughter Fights Back After Losing Mom, 56, to Alzheimer's; Bendiksen joins the Walk to End Alzheimer's October 4



The 2015 Southeastern Massachusetts Walk to End Alzheimer's® is set for Sunday, October 4 at Fort Taber in New Bedford.

Over 800 people are expected to attend the event that raises awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research.

For Ashley Bendiksen of New Bedford, the event is a way to honor her mother who she lost to Alzheimer's at just 56 years old. Bendiksen was just 19 years old when her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease at the age of 48. The oldest of three sisters, Ashley became a devoted caregiver to her mother for the next eight years.

"First her symptoms were common to Alzheimer's," said Bendiksen. "Over time, these symptoms grew worse. She was no longer able to be left alone or left to tend to herself. It

was required that I assist her to eat, dress and bathe, until eventually, she was dependent for all of her needs. Those eight years were both heartwarming and challenging. We developed an unimaginable bond.”

“While my mother was alive, I pledged to advocate for her, to care for her, and most importantly, to be a voice for her when she did not have one,” said Bendiksen. “This promise to her will not end just because she passed away.”

Driven to make a difference in the fight against Alzheimer’s Bendiksen joined the Walk to End Alzheimer’s in 2014 as the events emcee and was thrilled to later accept the offer to become the chairperson of the 2015 Walk.

“The Walk to End Alzheimer’s is truly an incredible walk,” said Bendiksen. “Everyone walks for someone they love and this creates a powerful energy. I love being a part of this walk because it unites the community and also because it raises money for research.”

“The Walk to End Alzheimer’s is enormously empowering to families who are living with the challenge of Alzheimer’s,” said James Wessler, President/CEO of the Alzheimer’s Association, MA/NH Chapter. “It’s important for people to know that they are not alone and that they can do something to fight back. The Walk to End Alzheimer’s is a day to commit to changing the trajectory of the disease.”

“What I’ve learned from my mother’s rare case is that there is so much more we need to learn about Alzheimer’s,” said Bendiksen. “Additionally, more and more of our loved ones are being affected. Numbers grow by the day. For all of these reasons, we need to fund research and do everything we can to find a cure.”

More than 5 million people in America are living with Alzheimer’s. The Alzheimer’s Association Walk to End Alzheimer’s is the nation’s largest event to raise awareness

and funds for Alzheimer's care, support and research. For information or to sign-up to participate in the Walk to End Alzheimer's, call 800-272-3900 or visit www.alzwalkMANH.org.
