

Walk to support Humboldt and Del Norte counties' Alzheimer's patients

September 29, 2022



The 7th annual Walk to End Alzheimer's – Humboldt County will take place on Saturday, October 8, at the Adorni Center in Eureka. Registration starts at 9 a.m. The opening ceremony is at 10 a.m. Participants can walk either a one- or three-mile course and can learn about Alzheimer's disease, advocacy opportunities, clinical studies enrollment and support programs and services from the Alzheimer's Association.

There is no fee to register and no limit on the numbers of team members. According to Community Engagement Manager Kim Coelho, this event is held in over 600 communities nationwide to promote awareness about the disease and to raise funds.

"Participating in the Walk to End Alzheimer's helps to take away the stigma from this disease, it helps start the conversation," Coelho said.

To sign up as a team captain, join a team, register to walk as an Individual, donate or volunteer, go to: act.alz.org/humboldt, text ALZWALK to 51555 or call Coelho at (707) 832-4577 x1240. Donations can be

made online or mailed to: Alzheimer's Association, P.O. Box 2542, McKinleyville CA 95519

Walk participants will join in a meaningful tribute ceremony to honor those affected by Alzheimer's disease - the Promise Flower Ceremony. The Ceremony provides participants the opportunity to collectively promise to do what they can to help find a cure for Alzheimer's disease and to raise awareness for the cause. Each Flower color represents a personal relationship with Alzheimer's disease.

Blue - someone who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or another dementia.

Yellow - someone who cares for someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia or who knows someone with the disease.

Purple - someone who has lost a loved one to Alzheimer's or another dementia.

Orange - someone who doesn't have a personal relationship with Alzheimer's disease, but cares about the mission of the Alzheimer's Association.

White - someone who symbolizes the first survivor of Alzheimer's disease.

This year's Promise Flower holders are Chris Smith (Blue), Doralee Smith (Yellow), Ellen Durfee (Purple), John Kennedy O'Connor (Orange), and Magnolia Mitchell (White).

Chris Smith, who has co-owned many Humboldt County restaurants including Abruzzi's, has been living with the Alzheimer's Disease for over 10 years.

Smith was in Chicago, running two fine dining restaurants, and meant Curly Tate. Smith later visited Tate in Ferndale and then moved to Humboldt County. Smith has always been active in his community and has supported many important causes.

Now, he wants to help the Alzheimer's Association find a cure for Alzheimer's disease.

Doralee Smith is Chris' wife of 35 years and his caregiver. She has been at Chris' side and supported him throughout the years. When he was running Abruzzi, she would get off work teaching and then help Chris host at the restaurant. She did this so they could spend more time together. They no longer manage the daily rigors of the restaurant, but they both maintain an active lifestyle and enjoy their two tiny dogs, Dusty and Woody

Ellen Durfee lost her husband Bob to Alzheimer's on January 16, 2021. Ellen feels that Bob might have lived longer if it hadn't been for the social isolation that was caused by COVID. Bob was very social and active in the community. He served as the Assistant Fire Chief for the Fairhaven Fire Department and later as a volunteer Chief. Ellen has also been an active community member, serving on the board of directors of Hospice of Humboldt and United Indian Health Center.

John Kennedy O'Connor is the anchorman for Redwood News. He will be walking to support the cause and the Association's vision of a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia. While John has not faced

Alzheimer's in his own family, he has seen the impact on friends and colleagues who care for loved ones with the disease, and is aware that the number of those affected continues to grow.

Magnolia Mitchell is this year's white flower holder. She is the light of hope that we hold for a cure to Alzheimer's disease and symbolizes the first survivor of Alzheimer's disease.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than 3,500 people in Humboldt and Del Norte counties suffer from the fatal disease, a number projected to rise to more than 5,000 in the next decade. More than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease, the sixth-leading cause of death in the U.S. (the third leading cause of death in California) and the only disease among the top 10 causes that cannot be cured, prevented or even slowed. Additionally, more than 11 million family and friends provide care to people with Alzheimer's and other dementias in the U.S. In CA alone, there are more than 630,000 people living with the disease and 1.6 million caregivers. 1 in 6 Californian Baby Boomers are expected to develop dementia.

According to Bonnie Neely, Walk co-chair, "one in three seniors are diagnosed with a dementia related illness, this is a disease that is going to impact everyone. Raising funds will help us identify, slow down, and ultimately prevent this devastating disease. If you look at the millions of research dollars that have been spent on cancer, heart disease, HIV, stroke, you will see a dramatic decrease in deaths from these diseases which is wonderful. We can do the same for Alzheimer's, we just need the research dollars to fund the research proposals."