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ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION
ASPIRE
PHILANTHROPY MAGAZINE

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Private philanthropy is the driving force behind the care, support and research efforts of the Alzheimer's Association — and you are a valued and instrumental partner in our fight against this disease. We are committed to investing your contributions efficiently and effectively, while connecting you with the outcomes you help us achieve.

COVER PHOTO

Zenith Society member
Sheila Konar at her home
in Rochester, New York.



Jeff Borghoff: My Alzheimer's Story

When I was diagnosed with younger-onset Alzheimer's disease at the age of 51, my world came crashing down around me. But because of the Alzheimer's Association and its community of advocates, champions and supporters like you, I didn't give up.

In July 2015, I started experiencing some facial twitching and drooping. Despite my family history of Alzheimer's, doctors initially wrote the disease off as a potential diagnosis because I was so young. During almost a year of testing, I grew increasingly frustrated with my worsening symptoms: full-body twitching, memory loss, and trouble with speech and balance.

Eventually, my wife, Kim, who never quits on anything, contacted the department of Neurology at Columbia University Medical Center, where I received my diagnosis in March 2016.

Sharing the news with my children was extremely difficult. My youngest daughter, 18, was very vocal and angry. My middle daughter, 20, cried and said, "You're gonna forget me." This was devastating to hear. My son, 22, tried his best to deny I was ill. He finally accepted it and cried in my arms like a babe.

I'm overcome with sorrow thinking I'll leave my wife a widow and that I may never walk my daughters down the aisle or play with my grandchildren. I hate thinking of these things that will very likely be my reality.



But I've never been one to sit idle. A few days after my diagnosis, I said to Kim, "I want to do something about this."

My neurologist, Dr. Karen Bell, suggested we contact the Association. In doing so, we found valuable resources, such as alz.org and the ALZConnected® online community. Kim started attending a caregiver support group at the Delaware Valley Chapter. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, these services and many more are free to families like mine.

We also took action. I became a member of the Association's National Early-Stage Advisory Group — individuals living in the early stage of the disease who share their perspectives, help reduce stigma, and advise the Association on programs and services. My family created an annual fundraising event called Walk to Remember in our hometown of Forked River, New Jersey, and I also participated in several Walk to End Alzheimer's® events, raising close to \$5,500. So many of my friends, family and community members came out to walk alongside me. The feelings of love and support were overwhelming.

My involvement with the Association has given me purpose and hope in my time of greatest need. It's been said that big things are done by a series of small things brought together. I know that, together, we can defeat this disease. ☯