

Distant memories come to forefront in Northport swim

By Karen Forman

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August 03, 2011 | 03:34 PM

Eight years ago, Harborfields High School physical education teacher Bryan Proctor, 27, created the Distant Memories Swim to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease and he alone swam to raise money. The second year, his brother Eric, 24, accompanied him.

This year, on a beautiful Thursday at Asharoken Beach, 32 people gathered around Proctor, looking at the calm bay, waiting to make the swim.

"Last year there were whitecaps," Proctor said. "Between the wind and the chop, it was a really tough swim. It took people three hours instead of an hour and a half."



The Daly brothers, Patrick, left, and Jim, right, with Jim's children Leanne, 12, and Callan, 10. Photo by Karen Forman ([click for larger version](#))

The group was there to cross 3.5 miles of Northport Bay — from Asharoken Beach to Knollwood Beach, Huntington — to raise money for Alzheimer's. This year, the event was in honor of Hal Daly, a 40-year Jones Beach lifeguard who died of Alzheimer's in 2003.

Among the people cheering the swimmers on were Daly's son Jim, who swam the previous few years but was unable to do so this time because of a broken collarbone, so he talked his brother, Patrick, into participating. Jim's children, Leanne, 12, and Callan, 10, were also there to watch the swim.

"Patrick and I grew up with our dad at the beach," Jim Daly said. "We learned how to swim there with him. This is a great opportunity to do something to raise money and awareness for Alzheimer's and at the same time honor our dad."

Greg Taylor was waiting to swim for the fourth year in a row and had brought along wife Patty, 4-year-old daughter Maggie and son Seamus, who turned 2 on Thursday.

"I am swimming for my grandma, who died of Alzheimer's," said Taylor, who is a co-worker of Bryan Proctor's.

There were some newcomers on hand as well. Michael Posillico of Huntington, Bill Mondello of Northport, Chris O'Neill of Asharoken and Steve LoPiccolo of Hauppauge were making the swim for the first time. They had read about the charity event in the newspaper a few days earlier and were able to quickly raise a few thousand dollars. Mondello and LoPiccolo just completed an Ironman triathlon but still thought the Northport water trek would challenge them.

After the swimmers make the trip across the bay, they are treated to lunch partially donated by Whale's Tale and driven back to Asharoken Beach if they don't have a ride, Eric Proctor said. "While we are swimming, kayakers escort us across the bay so we don't get run over by boaters," Eric Proctor said. "The boaters tend to forget that sometimes people are swimming in the bay. The kayakers are also carrying Gatorades and waters to [hydrate] anyone who needs help. There have been people who kayaked for us one year and then swam the next."

Bryan Proctor added they used to do this swim on the weekends but there was too much boating traffic, so they changed it to during the week, even though it's harder for some of the swimmers to get off from work. "But it's more important to keep everyone safe. We also give all the swimmers bright yellow swim caps to make it easier to see them."

Proctor organized the swim originally to honor his grandfather and two other relatives who died of Alzheimer's. So far they've raised over \$60,000 total, \$10,605 this year. He came up with the idea for a swim because he was a lifeguard for the Town of Huntington while he was in college and always wondered if he could swim across the bay.

Donations are still being accepted online at www.alz.org/longisland or by mail at AALI, attn: Distant Memory Swim, 3281 Veterans Memorial Highway, Suite E-13, Ronkonkoma, NY 11779.