



# WAGING A WALKING BATTLE

2,100 hike to raise funds for Alzheimer's fight

BY CANDICE FERRETTE  
candice.ferrette@newsday.com

Many walked in memory of their grandmothers, fathers, cousins and friends.

Pat Boyden, however, wanted to give herself yet another memory to desperately hold on to. Two years ago, the 58-year-old Valley Stream woman was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

"I'm a baby boomer. Nobody expects it to hit this early," she said after a brisk 5-kilometer walk.

Boyden was among the

2,100 participants in the Walk to End Alzheimer's, held yesterday at Old Bethpage Village Restoration. "It's not just an old person's disease," she said.

The ninth annual fundraiser, presented by the Alzheimer's Association Long Island, drew even more people than last year. By morning registration, the event was on track to beat the goal of raising \$400,000 for research and support programs, executive director Mary Ann Malack-Ragona said.

About 60,000 people on Long Island have Alzheimer's disease. The condition is the most common form of dementia in older adults, affecting the part of the brain that controls thought, memory and language — limiting a person's ability to carry out

daily activities.

Al Salsano, 66, of Old Bethpage, walked with his team of 15 family members in honor of his mother, Lucy, 92, who lives in a Nesconset nursing home.

Over the past decade, the disease ravaged the once glamorous woman who everyone used to think looked like Lady Bird Johnson. Today, she relies on a wheelchair, unable to speak or live independently.

"It is very hard to watch," Salsano said. "You feel like you've really lost the person."

About 5.4 million Americans have Alzheimer's, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The number has doubled since 1980 and is expected to hit 16 million by 2050, the CDC says.

Those are startling statistics that require prompt atten-

tion, patient advocates say.

In July, the Alzheimer's Association opened a resource center in Bay Shore to offer adult day-care and caregiver training. Next month, the group will open another office in Southampton.

Many of the newly diagnosed, like Boyden, fear what the future will bring. She admits her mind occasionally "goes blank" and she has difficulty recalling recent events.

But she has a much more vivid long-term memory, which helps when connecting with old friends on Facebook, she jokes. She is even helping to organize her 40th high school reunion.

"You have to work with your limitations and find ways to compensate," she said.



PHOTOS BY DANIEL BREGANAN

Families and friends take part in the 2011 5K Walk to End Alzheimer's in Old Bethpage, an annual event organized by Alzheimer's Association Long Island.

