

Taking A Stroll For A Cause

Walker brings attention to Alzheimer's disease

BY COLLEEN REYNOLDS

Once a year on a crisp fall day, a North Sea man rises early and laces his sneakers for a roughly marathon-length walk from his David Whites Lane home, east along Montauk Highway, to the Montauk Green.

What started about five years ago as a personal endurance test for the now 74-year-old Cory Leible will be transformed this week into part of a greater cause, as he participates in the Alzheimer's Association Long Island chapter's inaugural East End Walk to End Alzheimer's.

The purpose of the event is to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease and honor those affected by it, while raising money to find a cure.

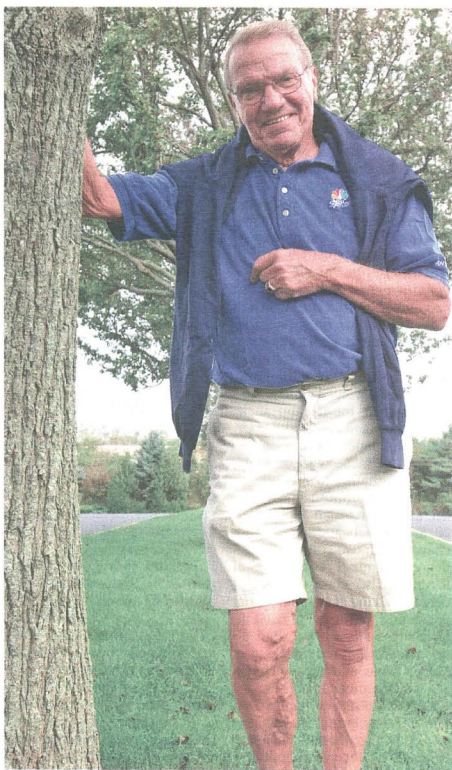
Prior to the walk, at 7:30 a.m., the Alzheimer's association will celebrate the grand opening of its new satellite office at 33 Flying Point Road in Southampton, near the intersection with Hampton Road, County Road 39A and Montauk Highway.

When Mr. Leible sets off this Saturday from the new Flying Point Road office, his steps will become strides to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease, a form of dementia that is gradually robbing some 5.4 million Americans of their memories and personalities and threatens to rob millions more, including many on the East End, in the coming decades.

While the sprightly senior will kick off walk by himself at 8 a.m., other participants will join him at 3 p.m. for the final 5K, a stretch covering the distance between the East Hampton Nature Preserve and Gurney's Inn on Old Montauk Highway in Montauk.

"This thing should be eradicated in this day and age," said Mr. Leible, noting that Alzheimer's has afflicted many of his acquaintances over the years. "You go through life and then at the end you don't know your wife, your kids—it's a very sad thing."

At the grand opening of the new office, breakfast will be catered by The Blue Duck Bakery Cafe, according to Mary Ann Malack-Ragona, executive di-



Cory Leible, 74, of Southampton will be walking from his home to Montauk on Saturday for the Alzheimer's event. Other participants will join him in East Hampton for the final 5K.

DANA SHAW

rector and CEO of the Long Island chapter, which is based in Bay Shore after moving from Ronkonkoma several months ago.

The new office comes as a result of a growing demand for services on the East End, Ms. Malack-Ragona explained, not-

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ing that her organization serves more than 100 clients on the East End. The final push for a local office, however, came after a man whose wife was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's called to say that he would be willing to travel from their home in Greenport all the way to Plainview in order to attend a support group meeting.

"The time has come. There are more and more calls from the East End," Ms. Malack-Ragona said.

Her group has signed a two-year lease for the office and plans to have a social worker available two days per week to start, but leading up to being there full time. The space will be used for care and consultation, as well as training for caregivers, she said. One of the chapter's goals, she explained, is to keep families together in their homes and avoid premature placement in nursing homes.

She said projections call for the Alzheimer's population to mushroom from 5.4 million nationwide today to about 14 million to 16 million in the next 20 to 30 years.

"The real scary part of this is the folks who are under the age of 65," she said, noting the relative lack of services for early onset Alzheimer's, in which symptoms first appear before age 60.

Walk participants are encouraged to register online at 2011eastendwte.kintera.org/longisland, but may enter at the walk's starting point in East Hampton, which will be decorated with purple balloons, the color of Alzheimer's awareness. Participants who raise more than \$100 will be invited to a post-walk celebratory barbecue at Gurney's Inn.