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THE WALK Letter

SPRING/SUMMER 1993

EXPLOSION OF SUPPORT ENCOURAGES AIDS WALK ORGANIZERS

Revenues Doubled In '92 – \$1.2 Million Hoped For In '93

They came from Hyde Park, Rogers Park, and virtually every other Chicago neighborhood. They came from Arlington Heights, Palatine, and many other suburbs. They came from all over the Midwest and from several countries.

Some people stepped away from sick friends and relatives for a few hours to participate in Chicago's third annual AIDS Walk last September. Some people brought

friends and relatives and pushed them in wheelchairs. As they travelled the 10 kilometer course, many, many people reflected on the memories of a friend—or ten friends, or a hundred—lost to AIDS.

Tears and comforting hugs were the order of the day. But smiles and exuberant cheers were also the order of the day, as the triumphant crowd of 25,000 revelled in their accomplishment.

Last year's AIDS Walk brought in a total of \$821,000 for local AIDS and HIV organizations—double the amount raised in 1991. The event was the largest AIDS fundraiser in the Midwest and the sixth largest Walk in the country. It seemed amazing to almost everyone involved. But people are already starting to get excited about the fourth annual AIDS Walk, because it promises to be even bigger.

Early Start, New Ideas for '93

Janet Beals, AIDS Walk Chicago's new Director, helped lead Boston's 1992 AIDS pledge walk in a drive that netted \$2.9 million. Beals is excited about supervising the efforts in Chicago because she sees enormous potential for growth.

"We're doing more outreach and promotion than ever before," she said. "We're reaching out to everyone who was a sponsor last year and asking them to walk. We're providing more support to teams, which are the back-

bone of AIDS Walk. And we are recognizing individual accomplishments in new ways—walkers who raise \$250 or more will receive commemorative tee-shirts, and those who raise \$500 or more will get special limited-edition sweatshirts that aren't available to anyone else."

Amy Knoll, this year's volunteer coordinator, assists the volunteer project leaders by recruiting and coordinating the volunteers they need to get the job done.

She's looking for envelope stuffers, telephoners, speakers and more. Knoll is amazed at the amount of volunteer support that she sees months before the Walk. "This time last year, there weren't nearly as many people," she says. "We haven't even had our official volunteer kick-off yet! I think this year is just going to be incredible."

Andy Tellez, who has assisted with all three earlier Walks, is the volunteer leader responsible for outreach at

street fairs this year. Tellez decided to take on the greater responsibility this year "because I've lost more friends to AIDS," he says. "I can't give much money but I can give my time, and so I think it's important to do that."

Tellez said that his best friend died of AIDS on Christmas day, 1989. "Then one of Tommy's other friends died soon after the second Walk in 1991. After he died I thought about how much spiritual strength he had provided for people, and it made me want to have more of a commitment to helping others."

Tellez commented, "It's the suffering that gets you—everything a person has to go through before they die of AIDS." The way he looks at it, the agencies that benefit from AIDS Walk help to ease the suffering.

Eileen Durkin, Executive Director of Howard Brown Health Center and Chair of the AIDS Walk Board, appreciates AIDS

Walk for similar reasons. "Something I've always liked about the Walk is that the money gets used for direct services," she explained. "AIDS Walk funding helps Howard Brown to provide HIV-related services to more than 500 people annually—we're making a tangible difference in that many lives. Whether it's meals, housing, grief support, or direct care, the 13 agencies involved in the Walk are collectively helping many thousands of people each year."

Corporate Support Growing

"More and more people are able to put a face to AIDS," Beals explains. "Companies are seeing this, especially when they have lost employees to AIDS."

The Walk is a good way for them to begin to make a commitment to fighting the disease."

Beals reported on several promising developments. Corporate sponsors Walgreens and Chartwell Midwest both made major financial commitments to AIDS Walk in April. West Coast Video is putting pledge sheets in its 36 Chicago-area stores, and Dominick's Finer Foods is putting posters in its 90 Chicago-area stores.

Canteen, Inc. is donating food for Walk participants.



"Businesses are clearly more interested this year," Beals said. "This early support is only a fraction of what we expect to get, so it looks like it's going to be a banner year. For example, one company was not so sure at first, but they made the decision to support AIDS Walk after looking at a list of previous supporters and seeing their own customers and competitors there."

It's common for employees who do the AIDS Walk to take the initiative. Craig Sonenberg, an employee of Helene Curtis, has participated since the first Walk in 1990. Last year, he approached Helene Curtis with a group of co-workers and convinced the company to match the pledges that the employees collected. This year Helene Curtis plans to provide all employees with additional support and incentives, such as tee-shirts, a weekend hotel stay, and possibly even airline tickets.

"I started with my own determination and enthusiasm, then group involvement, and now it's really taken on a life of its own," says Sonenberg.

If you would like to know more about getting your company involved in AIDS Walk, call the AIDS Walk Team Line at 312/935-7063.

Join Us
Sunday,
September 12
for the
4th
ANNUAL
WALK FOR LIFE.
The 10 kilometer
pledge walk to
benefit Chicago
AIDS services.

The Media Partnership with the Daily Herald, WLS-TV Channel 7, and WNUA-FM 95.5 is again expected to bring in many new walkers. The combination of this key urban television station, prominent Chicago radio station and major suburban daily newspaper is a recipe for success.

AIDS WALK



CHICAGO