



HEART BEAT

THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE JOE MARTIN ALS FOUNDATION

December 2023

Pitching in for PALS: Reflections from Neil Cottrell, JMALSF President

"No one is telling us how to plan for ALS. What do we need to do? What can we do?"

These are some of the questions the daughter of a person with ALS (PALS) asked me during a home assessment last week. I visit every family we serve in their home to help them navigate the many challenges of ALS. We encourage families to be proactive, to get the equipment they need to continue living actively, and to continue calling on us as soon as they need help.



PALS Asia Jami, seated, with Neil Cottrell (in black), throwing the first pitch at the Charlotte Knights game on June 2nd, Lou Gehrig Day 2023.

Uncertainty and not knowing what to do can be scary. I can see and feel the sense of relief when we provide solutions and answers to the many questions that PALS and their loved ones have about how to fight ALS.

We are still the only organization of our kind in this country. What strikes me, as I reflect on this year, are the many supportive partnerships that we have at every level; from the individual supporter, to large corporations, to teams like the Charlotte Knights who invited us to help them commemorate Lou Gehrig Day with the community at Truist Field on June 2nd (pictured above). These important connections strengthen us, and enable us to help families navigate ALS as soon as they call on us, *for as long as they need us*.

Have a look through this newsletter for these partnerships in action. You'll see photos of our May luncheon in Greensboro, made possible by a group of friends who wanted to support our work serving PALS in NC's Piedmont Triad. Check out the images of our ALS Rivalry Softball Challenge, which takes place annually thanks to the team at *Knothole Foundation of the Carolinas* and the many incredible ALS families who come out to play each year. Our annual *Live Every Day* event raised more than \$140,000 to support our in-home caregiving programming in 2024, thanks to the dedication of individual supporters and local companies like *Joyride Productions* and *Cookies on the Side* who helped us deliver a fun and impactful evening.

The friendship and support you show us throughout the year helps ensure our clients can navigate ALS with purpose, with joy, and with hope. I am so grateful for this year of partnership and invite you to participate in our mission in 2024 through volunteering, giving of your resources or talents, and telling others about the work we do.

Thank you!

Awards Spotlight: Incredible People Who Make Our Impact Go Further!

This year, we chose three special individuals and one amazing local company as recipients of our annual awards! Caregiving and non-profit work is often done without the expectation of recognition, which is why we highlight the amazing people who exemplify our values, going above and beyond in support of our mission to equip families navigating ALS as they live actively with purpose, with joy, and with hope!

The JMALSF Caregiver of the Year Award

“Caring”, “Professional”, “A blessing.” This award recognizes excellence in care delivered by one of our JMALSF staff caregivers. We are excited to award this recognition to **Erin Horton**. Erin has been with the Foundation for just a few years, bringing her experience helping her mother through ALS to support other families as they navigate this disease. We are grateful for Erin’s competent and caring nature, which our clients regularly comment on after working with her. Caregivers are the central pillar of our success and we are honored to have Erin on our growing team!



The Vann Matthews Camper Spirit Award

Dean Thacker

Dean, pictured far right at Joe’s Camp, has been a camper with us for many years and always uplifts our camp weekend! Dean is kind, thoughtful, and considerate to all, demonstrating strong character in his daily life as he and his family navigate the challenges of ALS. Keep it up, Dean!



The Vann Matthews Caregiver Spirit Award



We presented this special family caregiver award to **Yvonne “Vonnie” Dirk**. Vonnie is a joyous person who provides daily caregiving, companionship and hope to her husband Kevin, ensuring he is able to stay busy and active as they navigate ALS together. Thank you for all you do, Vonnie!

Dan Ramirez Service Award

Katharine Kirkpatrick and **Miriam DiMond**, representing The Piedmont Triad Friends of The Joe Martin ALS Foundation



This year, a dynamic group of friends in the Piedmont Triad came together to figure out how they could help the multiple families in their community that are currently navigating an ALS diagnosis. Thanks to the special efforts of **Katharine Kirkpatrick** (pictured at right) and **Miriam DiMond**, (pictured at left, with Joe Martin’s daughter-in-law Laurie Martin, center), this group has raised over \$50,000 to help us sustain our expansion into the NC Triad.

Partner of the Year

Southern Blue Creations (Lizz Updegraff-McGrew)

Lizz (pictured at right) has been an incredible supporter of our mission over the past year! Through her company’s annual *Karting for Kids* event at Trackhouse Motorplex, Lizz raised over \$12,000 to benefit Joe’s Camp, our annual summer camp. Side note - Lizz was also our 2023 Joe’s Camp Director and helped us deliver our annual summer camp to more kids than have ever attended before! She brought in new activities and helped us raise awareness about camp throughout the community, attracting sponsors like Hendrick Automotive Group. Thanks to Lizz, we have funded our venue costs for camp next year. Thank you Lizz for your energy, creativity and commitment to the mission of The Joe Martin ALS Foundation!



Campaign Corner

Batter up for ALS at the 5th Annual ALS Softball Rivalry Challenge!



What a great day at the ballpark! This year, we welcomed *Dirk's Dodgers* to the event, as well as several new players who came out in support of their loved ones who are living with ALS. The Dodgers faced off against *Bob's Sox*, ending with a tied game at the Knothole Foundation ballpark in west Charlotte. QC News Anchor **Brien Blakely** announced our game again this year, and thanks to our teams we raised \$20,000 toward free services and support for PALS!

Thanks to our teams and sponsors, we raised \$20,000 to support families navigating ALS!



SNOWFLAKE Village



Did you know that every year *Snowflake Village* in Charlotte provides **free holiday trees to PALS** who would like one? We have a great time volunteering at their lot with PALS and their families (above are Neil Cottrell and PALS Kevin Dirk at the tree lot). You can support us by ordering a tree or wreath today by visiting their website (below) & **mentioning JMALSF when you purchase!**

<https://www.snowflakevillage.org>

Greensboro Luncheon: Raising Awareness about Our Piedmont Triad Expansion

We were honored to be invited to Greensboro, NC in May for a special luncheon that highlighted our work in this new region. The event, hosted by The Piedmont Triad Friends of JMALSF, raised awareness about our continued expansion into the Piedmont Triad this year. Over 200 people learned about ALS from Dr. James Caress (Wake Forest ALS Clinic, pictured bottom right), Lee Shores (currently living with ALS), and Keynote Speaker David Martin (pictured top right). The event raised over \$45,000 toward our budget for the region, which includes Winston-Salem, High Point, and Greensboro. We are currently serving 15 families in the Triad with in-home caregiving, transportation, and more!



Live Every Day 2023: A Spark in the Night

Live Every Day, our largest annual fundraising event, helps us support our costs to deliver free, in-home caregiving to people living with ALS. This event brings together dedicated supporters of our mission with families who understand the realities of navigating an ALS diagnosis. This year we were honored to have **Niki McDonie** (pictured at right) as our Keynote Speaker, delivering a speech about the realities of living with ALS as a busy, active woman who has held progressively senior, outward-facing roles with Disney corporate. Niki's joy, humor, and honest take on ALS had our guests laughing often, and occasionally holding back tears. Below is an excerpt from her speech which focused on finding your "spark" when life gets challenging:

"Before The Joe Martin ALS Foundation, my life was a ball of anxiety, questions without answers. With the Joe Martin ALS Foundation I am now able to live my life. I am able to take trips to see my friends. I'm able to do crafts that I love. I have time to do good things for others. Without The Joe Martin ALS Foundation, I would not have a life."

We are so grateful to all of our sponsors including **Joyride Productions** and Presenting Sponsor **Bank of America**. **Brian Blakely** of QC News kept us engaged as emcee for the evening, which ended with dancing to the tunes of local band **Jazz Revolution!** Thank you to everyone who made this year's event, our *first back in person since 2019*, a huge success!



(Keynote Speaker Niki McDonie, seated, and from left to right: Lynne Stinson, Niki's JMALSF caregiver, and Niki's parents Aleece and John).

This year's Live Every Day event on September 7th raised over \$140,000 to help people with ALS live with purpose, joy, and hope!



We had an amazing weekend at Joe's Camp August 11-13th! With 34 campers from 6 states, this was our largest group yet. Thank you to The ALS Association for their Presenting Sponsorship! Here are some photos from our fun weekend where kids from families affected by ALS can just be kids.



We provide all our services free of charge, thanks to supporters like you. If you'd like to join us, view our Giving Circles and make a donation easily online or by sending a check to the address below: www.joemartinalsfoundation.org/donate



Our mission is to empower families as they face the challenge of living actively with ALS by providing home care and other services at no cost.

Visit Us Online to Learn More: www.joemartinalsfoundation.org