

HEART BEAT

THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE JOE MARTIN ALS FOUNDATION

December 2025

Reflections from JMALSF President Neil Cottrell

Dear Friends,

Looking back on this year, I'm struck by the ways our community has come together to support families living with ALS. We've worked with a marketing specialist to better understand our brand. Talking with PALS, CALS, board members, clinicians, and donors, one message came through clearly: our mission to help families navigate ALS, is at the heart of everything we do.

Throughout the year, we offered families relief, through our free support services. That relief grows into control over a seemingly overwhelming challenge, and over time, confidence. Confidence to keep showing up, stay connected, and live each day with purpose.

We saw that purpose in action through our friends John Driskell Hopkins and Andrea Lytle Peet, who shared their inspiring stories in Charlotte and Greensboro, living fully and raising hope for everyone affected by ALS.

Our volunteers brought that mission to life. They helped at our events, built ramps, made home improvements, and assembled care packages for CALS and gift bags for PALS. Their efforts brought joy, comfort, and community to the families we serve.

Your purpose has shone brightly, too. Through your generosity, whether by giving, attending events, sponsoring programs, or sharing our mission, you've made everything we do possible. Because of you, every service we provide remains free for families facing ALS. Your support gives our families more than care, it gives them confidence, hope, and a reason to keep showing up every day. It gives them purpose!

This year reminded me how many people share our purpose and make our work possible. **Together** we are making a difference.

With gratitude,



President, The Joe Martin ALS Foundation

HONORING LOU GEHRIG DAY

In June, we had two opportunities to commemorate Lou Gehrig Day and celebrate our PALS in style! Dr. Jeff represented JMALSF at the Greensboro Grasshoppers game, throwing out the first pitch. Later that month, Niki brought her trademark creativity to the Charlotte Knights field, rolling right up to the catcher and tossing him the ball, reminding everyone that when you're living with ALS, sometimes you have to get creative to get the job done! Family, friends, and fans filled the stands at both games to cheer on our PALS and help raise awareness for ALS and The Joe Martin ALS Foundation.



Andrea Lytle Peet and John Driskell Hopkins

JMALSF at the Greensboro Grasshoppers



JMALSF at the Charlotte Knights



Awards Spotlight: Honorees Determined to Make a Difference!



Corporate Partner of the Year Hayden Home Studio—Sarah Hayden

We are thrilled to recognize Hayden Home Studio as our Corporate Partner of the Year! Its founder, Sarah, began her journey with The Joe Martin ALS Foundation as our very first Director of Development. After laying a strong foundation for our future success, she followed her passion into interior design, but she never stopped supporting us. Over the years, Sarah has continued to share her creativity and expertise, most recently designing the beautiful floral centerpieces for our past two Live Every Day dinners. Thank you, Sarah, for your lasting impact, ongoing partnership, and the beauty you continue to bring to our mission.

The Vann Matthews Camper Spirit Award

Kendall Thacker

We're proud to recognize Kendall!

A long-time camper, Kendall's cheerful attitude, kindness, and willingness to help made her a shining example of what the Vann Matthews Spirit Award is all about. She supported the younger campers, something everyone noticed and appreciated, and brought joy and positivity to every moment of the weekend. Congratulations Kendall!



The Vann Matthews Caregiver Spirit Award

Towanda Miller

Congratulations goes to Towanda Miller, this year's Family Caregiving Award Recipient! Towanda provides loving care for her husband, Derick, while also supporting others in her family. Balancing the demands of full-time work with caregiving is no easy task, yet Towanda does it all with grace, compassion and unwavering dedication. Her strength and selflessness embody the true spirit of family caregiving.



Volunteers with a Purpose!



Throughout the year, our incredible volunteers have shared their time, talents, and hearts to bring joy to families living with ALS. From building ramps to writing notes of encouragement, every act of service has made a meaningful difference. Wells Fargo employees created caregiver snack bags filled with personal messages to brighten someone's day. Volunteers from North Brook Baptist Church built a ramp to make one of our PALS' homes more accessible. Ally Bank employees rolled up their sleeves, visiting a PALS' home twice, to make important home improvements. And our own JMALSF volunteers spread love by assembling Valentine's gift bags for all our PALS. We're so grateful to all the volunteers and partner organizations who made this year brighter for our ALS community.



Thanks FiA!

Each year, **Females in Action (FiA) Charlotte** comes together to provide gifts for our families living with ALS. Their kindness brings joy and comfort to families during the holiday season. We're grateful for FiA Charlotte's continued generosity and the smiles they bring to our families year after year!

Shop to Support our Mission!

Visit our online store, featuring spirit wear for The Joe Martin ALS Foundation and Joe's Camps. Choose from t-shirts, sweatshirts, and totes in adult and youth sizes.

Every purchase helps support our PALS.

<https://www.bonfire.com/store/the-joe-martin-als-foundation-shop/>





STRIKE OUT ALS!

This year's ALS Rivalry Softball Challenge was another big hit, raising \$12,860 to support families living with ALS. Over the life of this event, \$150,000 has been raised to further our mission. Our teams, Dirk's Dodgers and Bob's Sox, played with heart, honoring seven families touched by ALS. It was a day filled with fun, friendly competition, and community spirit. Thank you to team managers **Andrew Taylor** and **Greg Burson**, along with our players, volunteers, sponsors, donors, and families who made the day such a success!



POLAR BEAR OPEN

Expanding our Reach in the Piedmont Triad

In March, the Piedmont Triad Friends of The Joe Martin ALS Foundation hosted the annual Polar Bear Open in Greensboro, raising over \$25,000 to support families living with ALS. The community's participation made a tremendous impact—every swing helped us serve PALS in the Piedmont Triad. A special thank-you to **Claire and Brian Cooke** for organizing this wonderful event. We're so grateful to be the beneficiary of this beloved Greensboro tradition!



Power of Determination Luncheon

The Greensboro community came together to show what the Power of Determination truly means! Our April luncheon raised more than \$35,000—surpassing our \$25,000 goal—to support free services for people living with ALS in the Piedmont Triad. We're deeply grateful to **Andrea Lytle Peet**, who joined us once again to share her inspiring story of completing marathons in all 50 states after her ALS diagnosis, and for reminding us why our work matters so much. Special thanks to **David Martin**, our emcee, and to our table hosts, volunteers, guests, and generous sponsors for making this event such a heartfelt success!

"Let your determination be contagious, expanding geometrically as you add to it the determination of others."—Joe Martin



Live Every Day–Our Most Successful Yet!

Live Every Day, raised more than \$236,000, surpassing our \$180,000 goal, to support the free services we provide families living with ALS. The inspiring evening featured **Ken Menkhaus**, C. Louise Nelson Professor of Political Science at Davidson College, as our emcee for the 2nd year in a row, and our guest speaker **John Driskell Hopkins**. John and his trio performed his songs, *Each Other* and *I Love You Forever*, as well as Tom Petty's *I Won't Back Down*, closing the night with a crowd sing-along of *Toes*. John shared with humor and honesty his journey with ALS and his life of purpose, after his diagnosis, creating music, cherishing his family, and raising awareness and funds for ALS, having already donated \$4 million to research, through his foundation, *Hop on a Cure*. The crowd erupted when John said, "I'm still singing it, so I'm still bringing it!" This year's theme, Purpose, resonated throughout the night, celebrating hope, resilience, and the impact our community makes. Our heartfelt thanks go to John, Ken, our event sponsors, and all our guests for making Live Every Day a true celebration, and for helping families live actively with ALS every day.



Emcee Ken Menkhaus with
Mike Rizzi & John Driskell Hopkins



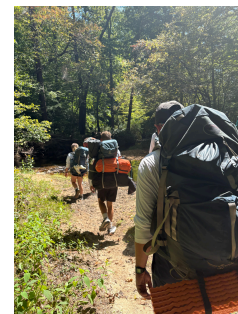
"Keep your sense of purpose intact, in sight, and in focus." –Joe Martin



Joe's Camps 2025: Connection and Adventure!



What an incredible year for Joe's Camps! This spring and fall, campers from NC, GA, OH, NY, and MS joined us to make new friends, create lasting memories, and share experiences with others who truly understand life impacted by ALS. Through activities focused on fun, connection, and personal growth, campers discovered a supportive space where they could be themselves, build confidence, and feel empowered. A heartfelt thank-you to our presenting sponsor, the ALS Association, and to ALS United NC and everyone who sponsored Joe's Camps this year for helping make these unforgettable weekends of friendship, connection, and adventure possible.



We provide all our services **free** of charge, thanks to supporters like you. If you'd like to make a donation scan the QR code, visit us online: www.joemartinalsfoundation.org/donate, or send a check to the address below.

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.

Follow us on social media



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

