



Run with it!

Newsletter of A2A3 • Fall 2010

A2A3 Events at a Glance

A2A3 at Big House Big Heart Run
Sun., October 3

3rd Annual Family Field Day
Sun., October 17

A2A3 Masters Swim Holiday Relays
Sun., December 12

3rd Annual Box Car Derby
Sat., March 26

Don't Miss Out!

Subscribe to our Events Calendar to get occasional notifications of A2A3 events for your Google or Apple calendar. To sign up, visit www.a2a3.org.

3rd Annual Family Field Day - Oct. 17

1:00 - 4:00 p.m. Burns Park Shelter & Fields

Join us at the 3rd Annual Family Field Day! We will again have sports clinics (field hockey, flag football, lacrosse, soccer). New this year: Strength & Conditioning Clinic for adults and kids by Annie Rubin (<http://steepsfitness.com/>) and a Pétanque Tournament. There will be grilled food, root beer floats and baked goods for sale, as well as t-shirts and PUMPKINS! Suggested Donation: \$25/family, \$15/individual. Go to www.a2a3.org for more information or to preregister.

Spring 2010 Wrap-up!

A2A3 supporter **Matt Barnes** had a great run at the Boston Marathon on April 9, finishing in 4:05:47. He raised awareness by running in an awesome Joel Dalton-designed shirt and raised funds for A2A3. Thank you, Matt!



Kappa Sigma Fraternity at Ohio State University

Kappa Sigma at OSU puts compassion ahead of rivalry. In May, the fraternity hosted the 1st Annual Silent Auction to benefit A2A3 and ALSA - Southern Ohio Chapter. Thank you, Kappa Sigma. We're looking forward to next year!

Congratulations to the **Burns Park Run** for another successful race! A2A3 received \$1,200 through their Run For Charity option. Many, many thanks!

In May the **Tappan Enough! Club** sold cool reusable water bottles and donated \$2,222.22 to A2A3! What an honor it was to work with this talented and committed group of students as well as their tireless leader, Laura Roth.



Last but not least, we want to thank **Anuja Rajendra**, the founder of Bollyfit Fitness Through Dance. Anuja's sparkling personality and contagious enthusiasm left everyone smiling during the May I Have This Dance? evening in June. We appreciate her donating part of the proceeds of this energizing event to A2A3.



Thank you
for your
support! To
date A2A3
has donated
\$54,000 to
ALS research.

A Note from Bob

When my friends and neighbors created A2A3, their goal was to help raise urgently needed funds for ALS research. Like so many, they want desperately to help find a cure or effective treatment for ALS. But what our friends may not have known was that by creating A2A3 and demonstrating compassion, they had in fact already begun administering an effective treatment.

We are all aware of the importance of medical treatments, and we know that extensive research supports the beneficial effects of various drugs and medical procedures for specific health conditions. We are less aware of the extensive scientific literature that examines the impact of social support (help and compassion) on health. Through my own research on the connections between socioeconomic factors and health, this is an area that I have become familiar with over the past decade.

Numerous hypotheses exist to explain the link between social support and health. I leave it to the references listed below for a more thorough treatment, but I will mention a few here. First, friends and family can provide information that allows individuals to make better decisions about their treatment options. An assessment of potential treatments conducted by our friends soon after I was diagnosed is an excellent example of this, and it helped our family tremendously in the first weeks after diagnosis. Second, support networks provide needed resources such as caregiving, financial support, meals, housing, and transportation that allow individuals who have a disease or are disabled to continue to function and have meaning in their lives. A more recent literature has focused on the effects of stress, claiming that social support reduces stress, which can have beneficial effects on different biological systems.

Hundreds of empirical studies have tried to determine whether social support has a causal and beneficial impact on health. But, for ethical and practical reasons, it's difficult to conduct a randomized study, where some individuals receive social support and others do not. As a result, most of the studies use what we call non-experimental or observational approaches to determine causal effects. The weight of the evidence across these hundreds of studies – studies that have examined people in numerous countries with varying diseases – suggests that social support does indeed improve health and well-being. This work is confirmed in animal models where true experiments can be conducted by, for example, taking away important members of a social support network within a clan and then examining the subsequent mortality of the remaining animals.

A2A3 will continue to support efforts to find a medical treatment that can effectively cure or reduce the speed of progression of ALS, and there are a few promising new studies underway that A2A3 is supporting. Yet we recognize that it will take years to determine whether these new treatments are effective and, if they are, bring them to market. Given that the typical patient with ALS survives only a few years after diagnosis, friends and families can feel helpless. Based on our own personal experience with this disease as well as evidence from numerous studies, I believe that social support is one of the most important treatments we have available to us, not only for ALS but for almost any disease.

Suicide: a study in sociology. Emile Durkheim. The Free Press. 1951.

"Social networks, host resistance, and mortality: a nine-year follow-up study of Alameda County residents." Lisa Berkman and Leonard Syme. *American Journal of Epidemiology.* 109(2):186-204, 1979.

"Social relationships and health." James House, Karl Landis, and Debra Umberson. *Science.* 241:540-545, 1988

Social support and physical health: Understanding the health consequences of our relationships. Bert Uchino. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. 2004.



Bob Schoeni (second from left) shares a laugh with Jackie Dalton, David Lowenschuss and Theresa Kubiak at the Buhr Park Sharks swim-a-thon July 13.



Inspiring A2A3 Initiatives

Two years ago, friends and neighbors of Bob Schoeni and Gretchen Spreitzer sat around a kitchen brainstorming. How could we help? Bob had recently been diagnosed with ALS and we were desperately wanting to support them. We decided we would raise money for ALS research, and planned our kick-off event, Family Field Day. Soon we became an official 501c3, with a board of directors and by-laws; we created a web page and started to tell people about A2A3 – Ann Arbor Active Against ALS. Before long we learned that ALS has affected many families right here in Ann Arbor and in the surrounding areas. And we quickly realized that many people are eager to make a difference in the fight against ALS.

What we have come to love about A2A3 is the energy, enthusiasm and creativity that people of all ages have brought to this fight. A2A3 fosters community spirit. We have seen children and adults create together, play together, and exercise together all in the name of fighting ALS. ALS is a bleak diagnosis, and yet it has been the vehicle for us to remember the importance of community support. A2A3's efforts to reach out have helped demonstrate that the world is a better place when we all work together.

In this newsletter, we honor the many individuals and organizations who have supported A2A3. We thank the hundreds of people who have donated money. But specifically, we want to recognize the various initiatives that have turned A2A3 into an amazing organization whose core is community spirit. While our ultimate goal remains finding a cure for ALS, in the meantime, A2A3 is deeply satisfied to be a conduit for community activism.

People have been active in a large range of ways. Here, we highlight some of the most recent fundraisers in addition to recalling other inspiring initiatives that have happened in the past two years. (See insert for full list.)

Husband and wife Nate Kearns and Jen Conine each designed a triple race challenge to join the fight against ALS. Nate chose three 100-mile trail bike races, and Jen three long-distance trail races. Nate has one ride left this fall; Jen finished off her series with the 50-mile Dances with Dirt Trail run this September. She ran the grueling course in 12 hours, finishing in pain but with a huge smile.



During their swim-a-thon, 70+ Buhr Park Sharks devoted one morning this summer to A2A3 to raise awareness about ALS and the need for research funds. Kids of all ages challenged and encouraged each other and together swam over 6,550 lengths of the pool and raised over \$5,500.

When Bob's brother, Roger Schoeni, shared the A2A3 video with his colleagues in Cincinnati, little did he know what would come of it. Co-worker Kim Kyle immediately wanted to do something to raise funds for ALS research. Inspired by A2A3's relationship with the local chapter of Phi Delta Theta, she thought of brother, Matt, a senior in the Kappa Sigma chapter at OSU. The fraternity was happy to help and held a 1st annual Silent Auction to benefit ALS research in May.



Sole Supporters

Max Showalter, 9, was determined to raise money for ALS research, but he wasn't sure how. Then one day during his art class at Westerly Elementary School (Bay Village, Ohio), when they were painting, Max's shoes got wet with paint. He decided to wrap his feet in papertowels.



Alex, Max and Christian

When friends started asking him to do it for them, Max knew this was it! With friends Christian Dupps and Alex Semancik, they decided to manufacture and sell "soft shoes." The shoes, which they sold for 50 cents, were made with paper towels and duct tape, and many found them "very comfy." In addition to raising money, the boys raised awareness about ALS by talking to their classmates.

New from A2A3...

Master Swim Holiday Relays Set for Dec. 12

A2A3 presents our first Holiday Relays at Skyline H.S. on Sunday, Dec. 12. This is a U.S. Masters Swimming (USMS)-sanctioned charity event. Events will include all standard USMS relays (200, 400, 800 free relays and 200, 400 medleys), plus six non-traditional/fun relays. The entry fee is \$40 per swimmer which includes six relay swims (5 of your choice + the optional t-shirt relay) and an event t-shirt. All proceeds benefit ALS research! Bring your friends and teammates...or come solo and we'll put non-traditional relay teams together for you.

We Want Your Feedback!

We've partnered with a team of MBA students from the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan to collect your feedback about member communication, current fundraising activities & ideas for future events. Your survey will arrive via email or U.S. mail in the coming weeks. All comments are appreciated!

New T-shirts

Made from moisture-wicking technical fabric, these great running shirts cost just \$11.99! Available in youth and adult sizes. Go to www.a2a3.org to order yours today!



Contact Us



2020 Shadford Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734.623.9877
info@a2a3.org

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Active Against ALS
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Ann Arbor, MI 48104

