

ALS victims not alone, thanks to the Masons 'The ALS Walk is the greatest thing Sudbury Masons have done'

By Pamela Crich
FOR THE SUDBURY STAR

Garret Walsh has been competitive as a champion body builder. His competitive spirit lives, even though he is suffering from incurable Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). "I will be just as competitive with this disease as I was as a body - builder," Walsh said.

ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, is a rapidly, invariably fatal neurological disease that attacks the nerve cells responsible for controlling voluntary muscles. Walsh was diagnosed with the disease last August, but he doesn't have to fight it alone. The Sudbury/Manitoulin District Masons raised money for research on ALS through a walk last year, and plan to do so again this year.

Donald Mumby, Grand Master of Ontario of the 60,000 Freemasons, was at the Masonic Temple this week to speak of their efforts. "The ALS Walk is the greatest thing Sudbury/Manitoulin Masons have done," said Mumby, a retired RCMP Chief Superintendent.

A total of \$55,000 was raised last year, which is double from most walks done for ALS.

"They (Sudbury/Manitoulin Masons) were a little disappointed when only \$55,000 was the total," Mumby said. "Until they were told the average raised is \$25,000." Usually, when the Masons decide to donate to a specific organization or group, all funds given are raised through its own members. "We don't ask for government assistance or grants," Mumby said.

The Masons donate to many causes, including medical research for various diseases, bursaries to community colleges and universities, and the relief of poverty as well as money for peer training to educate students about drug and alcohol abuse. "The bursaries are given to any student in need and they don't have to be affiliated with the Masons," Mumby said.

The Sudbury/Manitoulin Masons have donated a fully furnished apartment to families who have sick relatives at the Memorial site of Sudbury Regional Hospital, as well as a room in the hospital. "All of this money is from Masons' own pockets," Mumby said. "It just shows the dedication to charity."

The Masons follow three fundamental principles which include brotherly love ("all people must be treated with respect and dignity"), relief ("the greatest gift is yourself and your time and effort"), and truth ("you must be truthful at all times and in all places"). Mumby said members must be 21 years of age, be of good character and believe in a Supreme Being and can be from any race, creed, colour or religion. "We don't care about the name, just that it's a Supreme Being," Mumby said.

There are four million Masons worldwide, including the Shriners. "You have to become a Mason before you can become a Shriner," Mumby said.

Marvin Streich, president of the Sudbury Chapter of ALS Ontario and a Mason, has planned another walk for this year in hopes of raising more money. "We are much wiser than last year," Streich said. "Though the base is small here, it's still amazing what you can do when you put your mind to it."

The ALS Walk is scheduled for Sept. 25 at Cambrian College.

For more information, call the
Masonic Temple at 673-1577.