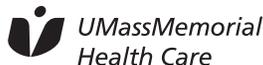


A newsletter for  
supporters of



# Giving matters

## Holding her head up high

With hope in her heart, survivor Jill Zitzewitz shares what got her through her cancer storm



Running for the  
Cellucci Fund

PAGE 3



10 years of the  
Winter Ball

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### IF THE UMASS CANCER WALK AND RUN

had a theme song, “You’ll Never Walk Alone” from the classic Broadway show *Carousel* (and recorded by the likes of Roy Orbison, Aretha Franklin and the Dropkick Murphys, among others) would fit the bill.

Cancer survivor and longtime UMass Cancer Walk supporter Jill Zitzewitz could certainly sing it—she knows a thing or two about walking through a storm with hope in her heart, because she was surrounded by supporters during her battle with cancer. Lots of them.

When Jill spoke at the thank-you reception following the 20th Anniversary UMass Cancer Walk in 2018, she introduced herself simply as “a mom, a scientist and an educator.” But many who know her would think she was being modest, as she is, more precisely, a Girl Scout leader, a soccer mom, a field hockey mom, a member her church choir, and an associate professor and researcher in the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Pharmacology at UMass Medical School who studies ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig’s disease).

So, when the news spread that Jill was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in March 2017, many people rallied around her. They wanted to be sure she didn’t walk this path alone.

Some friends helped her kids get to school, to soccer practice, to music lessons and to every other item on their calendars.



**Jill Zitzewitz (second from left) takes a well-deserved rest after completing the 5-mile Cancer Walk route in 2018. She is joined by UMMS student and longtime friend Meme Tran (far left), daughter Ellie and friend Teresa (right).**

Her daughter’s Girl Scout troop handled her annual planting of pansies in memory of her mother. Others helped around the house or kept her company.

In particular, one colleague made a very singular commitment. Sean Ryder is also a scientist at UMass Medical School and is known far and wide for his prodigious beard (10 inches at its longest). He went on social media with this promise: to shave if he could raise at least \$10,000 for multiple myeloma research. He was successful, raising \$15,000 and getting Jill to laugh in the process.

When asked if being a research scientist and a cancer patient simultaneously had

*Continued on page 2*

# Holding her head up high

*Continued from front page*

challenges, Jill admitted that it did.

“My research is focused on ALS, which has some things in common with multiple myeloma as both are protein misfolding diseases” she said. “So, I know quite a bit about both diseases on the molecular level.”

She also had access to scientific literature about clinical trials and other patient outcome studies.

Still, it didn’t prepare her for the grim prognoses that were described.

“However, I also had access to some of the smartest people around, right here at UMass,” Jill continued. “They made sure that

I knew about the latest work

being done on multiple myeloma—research that reports much better patient outcomes over the last 10 years.”

Current treatment for multiple myeloma includes bone marrow depletion followed by stem cell recovery. It starts with highly toxic chemotherapy that destroys all immune cells, followed by a stem cell transplant to the bone marrow where healthy stem cells begin the task of rebuilding the immune system.

Jill’s stem cell transplant was in August 2017 at UMass Memorial—and she is incredibly grateful for her care team led by Dr. Muthalagu Ramanathan.

*Jill has already registered her team for the 21st annual event... they’ll walk on with greater hope... that they can raise even more money for cancer research at UMass.*



**Jill Zitzewitz, right, participates in an emotional Survivor Lap at the 20th Anniversary UMass Cancer Walk in 2018 with her daughter Ellie Bilsel and Ellie’s friend Teresa.**

Once her disease was in remission, Jill set her sights squarely on the 2018 UMass Cancer Walk.

A regular walk participant, she was one of the first to register a team—Jill’s Maroon Walkers. Very quickly, the team gained 20 members, representing all those who rallied around her and her family during the previous year. Together, they raised \$4,000 for the 20th anniversary event. Jill surprised everyone (including herself) by walking the entire five miles.

Excited by these results, Jill has already registered her team for the 21st annual event. Together they’ll walk on with greater hope in their hearts that they can raise even more money for cancer research at UMass. ■

When you support the UMass Cancer Walk and Run  
**YOU GIVE HOPE! — Sunday, Sept. 22, 2019**

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# Every step they take

For these five people, the 2019 Boston Marathon is more than something to check off the bucket-list



Kathleen Berry

Julie Bowditch

Edward Craven

Dan Leone

Michael Walpole

**YOU SEE THEM EVERY APRIL**—the thousands who gather in Hopkinton to lace up their sneakers and embark on the run of a lifetime: the historic Boston Marathon. Many participate for reasons beyond themselves; they run to support worthy causes.

Among this year's noble group will be five people raising awareness and funding for vital amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) research being conducted at UMass Medical School. They are the 2019 UMass ALS Cellucci Fund Boston Marathon team.

Like the dozens of Cellucci Fund runners before them, these dedicated people want this horrific disease eradicated from this earth. They've seen firsthand how it devastates lives, because each one of them knows someone who either has ALS or has died from it.

Edward "Teddy" Craven, 22, said running the marathon for the Cellucci Fund is a fitting way to pay tribute to one of his youth coaches, Richard P. Kennedy, who was diagnosed with ALS three years ago after spending decades raising money to fund a cure for the disease.

"It's difficult to describe what a great person he is," said Craven, a senior at the University of Connecticut. He grew up with one of Kennedy's sons and recalled many basketball games and car rides with Coach Kennedy. "He's truly an inspiration."

Kennedy is president of The Angel Fund for ALS Research, a nonprofit that has one objective: to support the research of Robert H. Brown Jr., DPhil, MD, at UMass Medical School. ALS has touched the Kennedy family since 1989, when the disease claimed Kennedy's father. Several years later, Kennedy's youngest brother died from ALS at the age of 31; and in 2016, Kennedy was himself diagnosed with ALS at the age of 56.

Dan Leone of Waltham; Julie Bowditch of Worcester; Kathleen Berry of Charlton; and Michael Walpole of Hanover are also on the UMass ALS Cellucci Fund marathon team.

Leone will run in memory of his father, Donato Leone, who died from ALS in 2008 at age 78.

"This disease took him away from us. I am honored to be allowed to run the Boston Marathon and help

raise money for the Cellucci Fund so perhaps, one day, no one will need to suffer from this disease," Leone said.

Bowditch is running for her late uncle, Ron Merrill, who was diagnosed with ALS the weekend of the 2018 Boston Marathon and died from the disease that September.

"No one deserves to battle ALS. No one. But my Uncle Ron really didn't," Bowditch said.

This is the eighth year that runners supporting the UMass ALS Cellucci Fund have taken part in the John Hancock nonprofit marathon program. The partnership provides official race numbers to those who commit to individually raising a minimum of \$7,500 to support ALS research at UMMS. The Cellucci Fund marathon teams have raised more than \$400,000. ■

To show your support, you can either make a donation or choose to sponsor the team.

Learn more at [www.umassals.com](http://www.umassals.com)

**UMASS ALS** ADVANCING CRITICAL RESEARCH BREAKTHROUGHS  
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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SCHOOL

## MAKING HOSPITAL STAYS EASIER FOR KIDS

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Thanks to students in the 5th to 8th grades at St. Joseph School in Webster, patients at UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center can have a better experience while in the hospital. This photo shows just a portion of the fantastic donations they made as a service project for Catholic Schools Week. Our school-age and teen patients are loving the new Xbox games, and the bibs and blankets are so helpful for the babies.

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Together you helped us reach our goal of \$2 million.

# WINTER Ball 10th ANNIVERSARY



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