

Walk for awareness

Woman with lupus helps get word out about the chronic disease

By Susan Dibble □ *Daily Herald Staff Writer* □ Posted Wednesday, September 27, 2006

Naperville resident Ann Marie Glaviano didn't know anything about lupus when she was diagnosed with it six years ago.

In the previous three years, different specialists had told her she had irritable bowel syndrome, maybe a brain tumor, maybe non-Hodgkin's disease or food allergies.

When she finally learned at age 46 that she had lupus, the chronic autoimmune disease had targeted her kidneys and she was rapidly going into renal failure.

Two years of chemotherapy and high-dose steroids helped her to a measure of recovery.

"I've been blessed. My kidney function is good. I've recovered from the two strokes I've had," she said.

She still is plagued with fatigue, joint pain, numbness in her hands and feet, and short-term memory issues.

Divorced while in the worst of her illness, the mother of two has had to rely on her teenage son to be her primary caregiver. Unable to work, she has given herself to volunteering for a variety of causes.

She is serving as co-chairwoman of the inaugural DuPage County Life Without Lupus Walk and Run on Sunday. Registration starts at 8 a.m. and the walk steps off at 9 a.m. from the Riverwalk Grand Pavilion, Jackson Avenue and West Street, Naperville.

Participants have their choice between a 1-mile walk suitable for those with physical difficulties and a more challenging 3-mile route.

"We've been hoping to get 500 people," Glaviano said.

The Lupus Foundation already has had success with a Life Without Lupus Walk and Run held annually in Chicago's Grant Park.

Starting a second walk in the Western suburbs has been possible with the help of people like Glaviano, said Mary Dollear, health promotion manager with the Lupus Foundation of America-Illinois Chapter.

"This is the first DuPage County walk," she said. "I know we have a wonderful support group in Naperville."

The event will include speakers, entertainment, a visit from Ronald McDonald, a kids'

dash and a face painter for the younger set, Dollear said. Rick Zurick of WLIT radio will serve as master of ceremonies.

“It looks like it’s going to be a real fun event,” Dollear said.

Glaviano herself will walk with a team called Braconi’s Butterflies, sponsored by Braconi’s restaurant in Naperville.

The butterfly is a Native American symbol for balance, Glaviano said.

“Lupus is not one of those things you can walk away from. It’s a daily balancing act,” she said. “If you have a real good day where you’ve gotten a lot done, the next day you don’t go anywhere.”

A telltale butterfly-shaped rash across the bridge of the nose and cheeks also is one of the symptoms of lupus.

Glaviano herself never got the butterfly rash and that points to the problems in diagnosing the disease, she said.

Not all patients have the same symptoms, and the symptoms could be attributed to other causes.

The symptoms include: fatigue, joint swelling, muscle ache, joint ache, persistent, low-grade fever, skin rash, hair loss, weight loss, mouth or nose ulcers, light sensitivity, fingers turning white or blue in the cold, and pain in the chest when breathing deeply.

The severity of lupus also ranges widely. The systemic lupus that Glaviano has can cause inflammation of a number of body organs, and is characterized by periods of remission and flares.

Discoid lupus is confined to skin and characterized by flushing of the cheeks and rash. Certain prescribed drugs also can cause lupus-like symptoms.

The cause of lupus is unknown, although genetic and environmental factors are thought to be involved. Hormones also may play a role since the disease is far more common among women.

Nationwide, 1.5 million patients are estimated to have lupus, with 65,000 of those in Illinois.

Money raised by the walk will go to the Illinois chapter to support research, awareness and educational materials for patients and their families, Dollear said.