



The ALS Association

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News Release

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Caregiver's National Quilt Contest Supports ALS Association's Global Research Program

CALABASAS HILLS, Calif. (November 9, 2009) – As every caregiver who helps take care of someone living with ALS knows, leading anything resembling a normal life is nearly impossible.

Kathy Thompson of Virginia Beach, Va., believes in accomplishing the impossible and has done so on numerous occasions for The ALS Association.

A mother, entrepreneur and advocate for The Association, Thompson not only is helping her daughter-in-law Joy Thompson take care of her son, 35-year-old Josh Thompson, who was diagnosed with ALS in 2007, she also is trying to make a difference in the lives of tens of thousands of people just like him.

Thompson has launched a new fundraising campaign during National Family Caregivers Month. The goal of the “Hopes and Dreams Quilt Challenge for ALS” contest is to increase awareness about the disease, raise funds for The Association’s global research program through an online raffle and auction of the quilts, and “warm the hearts and laps of ALS patients.”

The Thompsons have received help from patient and family service staff members of the DC/MD/VA Chapter.

“We are so thankful to Kathy Thompson and her family for all they have done to raise awareness of ALS,” said Ken Nicholls, executive director of the DC/MD/VA Chapter of The Association. “This campaign will not only help fund important research, it will be a continued source of warmth for our patients. Quilters are a caring group and we are thankful that so many have expressed an interest in contributing their art to brighten the life of our patients.”

Individual quilters as well as groups of quilters have until July 30, 2010 to submit their quilts. The select quilts will be sold in an online raffle and auction beginning next August. The quilts that are not offered online will be distributed by The Association to people with ALS and their families. Other quilts will be featured in a traveling tour.

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“There are going to be many beautiful quilts,” Thompson said. “Quilters of all abilities are eligible to participate. Some quilts may be more beautiful than others, but every quilt will be made with love and care for an ALS patient.”

All participants are eligible to win prizes including batting, fabrics, patterns, quilting DVDs, gift certificates, magazine subscriptions and sewing machines. In addition, thousands of dollars in cash and prizes will be given for the best themed quilts, most quilts submitted by individual quilters and most quilts submitted by groups of quilters.

Thompson is the owner of Quilters Dream Batting. The company was founded 15 years ago and does business with 5,000 retail stores. (<http://www.quiltersdreambatting.com/purchasing.htm>)

“We are so active in the quilt industry,” Thompson said. “Quilters are so generous. We wanted the quilters to be aware of ALS.”

Thompson received positive feedback about the contest in Houston last month at an international quilting industry show. She was not prepared for the some of the comments she heard.

“What was interesting to me, and sad at the same time, is how many people’s lives have been touched by ALS,” she said. “When we were going from vendor to vendor to pass out our flyers asking them to join us as sponsors, it was quite surprising to me how many people would say, ‘Oh, my friend has ALS, my aunt has ALS, and my pastor has ALS right now.’ One person lost her husband and mother on the same day.”

Thompson hopes that people with ALS will appreciate the fact that someone made these quilts especially for them.

“We are asking the quilter to attach a note of introduction and well wishes with the quilt,” she said. “The quilt and note will reassure people with ALS that they are not forgotten and that there are people out there thinking of them. This will raise their hopes that awareness is being raised and warm their hearts and laps by receiving this special homemade gift.”

In 2008, still reeling from the shock and devastation of her son’s diagnosis one year earlier, Thompson and her family decided that the best way to honor Josh Thompson was to raise awareness, money for research and reach out to help ALS patients.

Thompson, who lives just six blocks away from her son, and her family assembled the largest team to participate in the Virginia Beach Walk to Defeat ALS, The Association’s national signature event. Nearly 8,000 people participated on the JT Walk team and raised more than \$600,000.

Josh Thompson, once a world class surfer is paralyzed and needs a ventilator to breathe. He recently was released from a hospital after surviving a bout of pneumonia.

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“It is heartbreaking,” said Thompson. “It is heartbreaking to have someone you love so much and was so strong and athletic to need you to take care of them. That aspect of it makes it emotionally difficult. It is physically difficult.”

“You have a grown adult who needs to be moved or relocated to have his physical needs met and that is challenging for the caregiver,” Thompson continued. “At the same time, I treasure every moment that I get to spend with him. I certainly wish that it was not under these terms.”

Thompson said her son is very enthusiastic about her fundraising efforts. He enjoys watching television, especially sports, and always has company.

“He has two beautiful sons who keep him entertained,” Thompson said. “He also has friends and family members who visit him. He has a lot of support for a terrible situation.”

Quilts should be sent to: “Hopes and Dreams,” c/o Quilters Dream Batting, 589 Central Drive, VA 23454. Quilts need to be submitted by July 30, 2010. Each package of Quilters Dream Batting contains a flyer about the contest.

For more information about the “Hopes and Dreams Quilt Challenge for ALS” contest and to download flyers and entry forms, visit the “Hopes and Dreams Quilt Challenge for ALS” Web site at <http://www.quiltersdreambatting.com/HD/ALS.htm>. Advance discount tickets for a drawing to win the best themed quilt also can be purchased on the “Hopes and Dreams Challenge for ALS” Web site. During National Family Caregivers Month, two tickets can be purchased for \$10. The regular price for a ticket is \$10.

To become a fan of the contest, visit the “Hopes and Dreams Quilt Challenge for ALS” Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Quilters-Dream-Batting-sponsoring-Hopes-and-Dreams-Quilt-Challenge-for-ALS/150913912237?v=wall>

For more information about National Family Caregivers Month, visit <http://www.alsa.org/patient/nfcm/default.cfm>

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