

# 2023 Walk Together for ALS

## Team Captain's Kit



Walk  
Together  
For ALS





2

## 2023 WALK TOGETHER FOR ALS

Walk Together for ALS is one of the signature fundraising events for the ALS Society of Alberta, bringing family and friends together from across the province. Each year, community members meet in their local parks and walk to raise awareness and funds for Albertans living with and affected by ALS. The Walk Together for ALS is the only event by Albertans for Albertans, supporting those living with ALS across the province. Funds raised remain in Alberta for client support services, and are dedicated to some of the most promising research activities taking place in the province.

Starting in 2001, Walk Together for ALS has grown to include many events across the province. Communities choose a local ambassador for the event as an opportunity to share and amplify the stories of those who are affected by ALS.

The Alberta Walk Together for ALS is the only Canadian fundraiser in support of those living with and affected by ALS in Alberta. Thanks to the incredible support of our volunteers, there will be 9 Walks across the province in 2023.

Thank you for your support!

## The ALS Society of Alberta

The ALS Society of Alberta's mission is to make each day the best possible day for people living with and affected by Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). We achieve our mission by providing support, facilitating the provision of care, promoting awareness, helping to find a cure, and advocating for change. We are the only charitable organization in Alberta to provide support to those affected by ALS.

Client support services in Alberta provide support to those living with and affected by ALS at no cost to our clients. When an individual is diagnosed with ALS, they are matched with a member of the client support services team to facilitate the provision of care and advocate for them across the healthcare system. The Equipment Loan Program provides mobility, communication and assistive equipment to people living with ALS to ensure they are comfortable in their homes for as long as possible. Some examples of equipment available are: walkers, manual wheelchairs, power wheelchairs, collars, ramps, porch lifts, iPads, voice amplifiers, hospital beds and mattresses. The Society also hosts support groups for those living with and affected by ALS, and support for youth through the Support for Champions program.

Our Client Services Team and Equipment Loan Program are at the heart of making possibilities for those living with ALS. Our programs have evolved over the years with the understanding of the physical, emotional, and financial toll that ALS can have on individuals and families. The costs of essential equipment for those diagnosed with ALS are often overwhelming, ranging from tens of thousands to over \$200,000. Thanks to the generous support of our donors, our services are available to those diagnosed with ALS in Alberta at no additional cost. In **2022**, the ALS Society of Alberta supported **440** families.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMS

In Edmonton, the majority of Walk Together for ALS participants organize themselves into teams and fundraise/participate as a group. This has been incredibly successful! Teams can consist of family, friends, co-workers, and other like-minded individuals dedicated to walking and raising money for this worthwhile cause.

Captains can create a team by selecting a team name and unifying a group of people. The Team Captain recruits team members remains in touch with them, chooses a fundraising goal, and registers the team. Registration for individuals and teams can be completed online at [www.alsab.ca/walktogetherforals](http://www.alsab.ca/walktogetherforals). Team Captains are able to customize their own webpage with photos and stories.

Teams create an atmosphere of togetherness and connection. An enormous sense of community is developed each year and felt by all teams that participate. It is an excellent opportunity to meet others, especially those who understand and have experienced the ALS journey.

Your role as Team Captain is crucial to the success of the Walk Together for ALS event. You are fostering a sense of togetherness and encouraging fundraising goals. By recruiting, organizing, and keeping in touch with your team members, you promote a sense of community and encourage fundraising success. Thank you!



## 2023 Walk Together for ALS Ambassador Colleen Olson

5

Hi! I'm Colleen Olson, and I have been an ALS warrior since my diagnosis on June 11, 2021.

My pre-ALS life was crazy busy and physically active. I completed a half marathon the year I turned 50 and normally walked at least 5 km daily with my dog Obi. I initiated fitness challenges at work, competing against others who were mostly 15-20 years younger than me. The beast that is ALS started to change my life's journey with symptoms starting the summer of 2020 – I just didn't know they were symptoms of anything, never mind ALS.

Looking back, I can identify a number of symptoms that showed their faces in the summer of 2020. There was the extreme cramping in my left leg, which often woke me up at night. I explained it away as a lack of magnesium or dehydration. The muscle twitching in my abdomen, which I found odd but ignored. The sharp pain I got when I occasionally lifted something heavy, which I thought might be a hernia but was really my core muscles spasming.

In late August 2020, I was walking my dog with a friend and fell when my dog did a hard jerk on the leash. I got up feeling foolish and continued the last kilometer of the walk feeling fine.

The next day I was walking down the street to my neighbours and realized that I was not walking normally. To make a long story short, the limp got worse and, by February 2021, had turned into foot drop. The road to diagnosis started in March 2021 with physiotherapy visits, MRIs, EMGs, and finally, the visit to the neurologist who confirmed what I already believed (the physiatrist's report indicating possible Motor Neuron Disease was all I needed to research what was going on).

So, I have ALS; what next? Having so much to think about caused an inability to sleep. I could not focus at work and left on disability within two weeks of the diagnosis. My husband, who was working in BC at the time, retired about a month later so we could spend more time together. He is an amazing guy who does everything he can to make my life wonderful.

Next were appointments, appointments, appointments, lots of appointments! There are the ALS Clinic's multidisciplinary appointments, where I see six or seven medical professionals, who all take great care of me. Infusion appointments, ten days each month, to receive one of the progression delaying drugs. Appointments for the drug study I am able to participate in, and finally, the appointments for the two research studies I have participated in. At first, all of this was overwhelming, but once we got into a routine, it did not seem so bad. I have met so many wonderful people through the appointments.

Over the past couple of years, we have taken a couple of vacation trips. We have gone on one to Niagara Falls, one to Vegas, and we have a cruise to Alaska booked for this coming July. Careful planning for my needs before we go has made the trips go smoothly. These trips are wonderful, but the best times leaving our home are to see family and friends.

We are blessed to have five wonderful grandchildren and another on the way! These little humans bring me so much joy. We are also blessed to have extended family who have made visiting me a priority. In the summer of 2022, we had most of my sisters and their families come for a family reunion. It made my heart so full to have us all together having fun. Having an active social life with wonderful friends who either host or come to our place for coffee, dinner, or game nights is also incredible. All of this personal contact is medicine for the soul, and I am very grateful that so many bring sunshine to my life.

Last summer, I was overjoyed to be able to go for walks again, as the ALS Society of Alberta loaned me a Colibri power scooter. What a difference being able to get out on the trails I used to walk made to my days.

The fresh air and being able to go with my husband when he walked our dogs really helped my state of mind. I hope that I am still strong enough to do it again this summer!

The scooter is not the only thing I have received on loan from the ALS Society of Alberta. Since registering in the fall of 2021, I have also borrowed a wheelchair, a platform walker, and a porch lift. The equipment loan program really helps keep out of pocket costs down, and I am very thankful that it exists.

The ALS Society of Alberta has provided me with so much more than equipment. The Client Services Coordinators have also provided me with support over the past year and a half. They are very special people who like to learn about you individually and remember what is going on in your life. I regularly attend the ALS Support group for those diagnosed with ALS. The Society organizes this group, and it has been something that I look forward to both for information from other patients and for fellowship with people who understand what I am going through. The hour and a half, twice a month, meetings are a time where we joke and laugh but also cry and support. The people in the group get to be like a family.

Since my diagnosis, my mantra has been, “Nobody is guaranteed a tomorrow.” Some may think that having a mantra like that is morbid, I believe that the phrase is all about living your best life today. This does not mean that I don’t have sad moments, I definitely do, but I am a practical person who is thankful for the abundance of blessings that I have in my life.



# Team Captain Checklist

8

1

## Create a Team Name

Be creative and have fun!  
You can also create a team look with colours,  
costumes and more.

2

## Recruit & Register

Ask friends, family, neighbours, and  
co-workers to join your team. Register online  
or contact us to mail in your registration.

3

## Organize & Collect

Discuss your fundraising goal and  
methods. Check your online donation page  
regularly to be updated on your goals.

4

## Meet & Walk

Choose a spot to meet on Walk Day,  
join together, and enjoy the day.  
Thanks to you and your team for all of your hard work!



# Frequently Asked Questions

9

**Q.** In what ways can I raise and collect funds?

**A.** You can use a pledge form to have people make donations to you. Alternatively, you can fundraise online at [www.alsab.ca/walktogetherforals](http://www.alsab.ca/walktogetherforals)

**Q.** Will my donors receive a tax receipts?

**A.** Donations of \$25 or more are eligible for an automatic tax receipt. Online donations will have their receipts emailed immediately. Pledge form donors will be mailed their receipts after the Walk.

**Q.** Should I bring cash and cheque donations to the Walk?

**A.** As a safe option, you can deposit cash and cheque donations during fundraising or before the Walk. You can bring cash and cheques to the Walk if needed. To deposit cash and cheques, visit any ATB Financial location and share the below transit and account numbers with them. Please staple the deposit receipt onto the pledge form and bring it to the registration desk on Walk day.  
Transit #07909  
Account #00116019224





# THANK YOU 10



We appreciate your interest in being a Team Captain and supporting the 2023 Walk Together for ALS. We appreciate all the work you do as a Team Captain! We look forward to seeing you on June 10, 2023, at Rundle Park for the Walk.

## Contact Us

### **Karen Caughey**

Executive Director

Phone: 403-228-3857

Email: [karen@alsab.ca](mailto:karen@alsab.ca)



5418 97 Street NW, Edmonton AB T6E 5C1



[www.alsab.ca/walktogetherforals](http://www.alsab.ca/walktogetherforals)