

Southeast KY Walk to End Alzheimer’s raises nearly \$62,000



The family of Tom Jensen served as this year’s walk ambassadors, and led participants along the route. | PHOTO BY MACEE SWAFFORD

BY MACEE SWAFFORD
STAFF WRITER

LONDON — The 2026 Walk to End Alzheimer’s – Southeast Kentucky brought 225 participants and 51 teams together at Town Center Park in London — raising \$61,916 toward a \$70,000 goal as of Monday.

This year’s total is up from around \$49,000 raised during last year’s walk.

Before participants began the walk, a Promise Garden Ceremony was held, with different colored flowers representing the various experiences and connections to Alzheimer’s disease.

Blue flowers represent someone living with Alz-



John Yanes, President of Common Spirit-Saint Joseph London, served as this year’s chairperson for the walk. | PHOTO BY MACEE SWAFFORD

heimer’s or another form of dementia. Purple represents those who have lost someone

to the disease. Yellow represents someone who is supporting a person living with

Alzheimer’s, while orange represents those who support the Alzheimer’s Association and its mission to end the disease.

This year’s walk chair was CommonSpirit-Saint Joseph London Hospital President John Yanes, with Saint Joseph Hospital serving as a sponsor for the second consecutive year.

“Saint Joseph Health is really privileged to be the sponsor again this year,” Yanes said. “For us, it means a lot, because being the hospital in the community, we see a lot of patients through our hospital that come to us, they’re hospitalized, and there’s a lot of complications with dementia and Alzheimer’s.”

Yanes aid the hospital’s involvement reflects its mission and commitment to the community.

“For us, it’s part of our mission, it’s part of who we are,” he said. “So it’s really a privilege to make this event possible here in Southeast Kentucky.”

The Tom Jensen family served as this year’s ambassador family, with sisters Natalie and Laura Jensen sharing their family’s experience with Alzheimer’s during the event.

Laurel County native Tom Jensen built a decades-long career in public service, serving in the Kentucky House of Representatives, where he rose to minority floor leader, and later in the Kentucky



A young boy is pictured holding a purple flower as he and his group march along the Walk to End Alzheimer’s route. | PHOTO BY MACEE SWAFFORD

Senate representing the 21st District. As a legislator, Jensen was a strong advocate for criminal justice reform, education, transportation and efforts to combat drug abuse, including legislation addressing methamphetamine and prescription drug abuse. He later served as the judge of the 27th Judicial Circuit Court.

The Jensen family was also the event’s top fundraising team, raising \$10,677.53. Team Nanny Sal followed with \$3,304, while Peggy’s Kids raised \$3,235.

Natalie Jensen thanked the family’s friends and supporters for helping the team raise nearly \$11,000 and spoke about the impact Alzheimer’s has had on her father, Tom.

“As you know, Alzheimer’s is a horrible disease,” Jensen said. “It’s robbed a man his ability to converse and be engaged.”

Jensen described her father as someone who spent much of his life serving others, and working to improve the Laurel County community. She said watching her father’s health decline has changed her perspective on the disease, and reinforced the importance of spending time with loved ones.

“This fight is for the next generation,” Jensen said. “My hope is that my niece, El, and my nephew, Spencer, will not experience the loss of a parent to Alzheimer’s.”

The walk concluded after participants successfully completed the route from Town Center Park to the Laurel County Courthouse, bringing together families, caregivers and community members in remembrance of those lost to Alzheimer’s and in support of those currently living with the disease.

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