



Trail to a Cure, Inc.

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# News Release

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## TRAIL TO A CURE ANNOUNCES TOTAL RAISED FOR CHARITIES

ROCHEPORT, MO, JUNE 5, 2008: Liz Rettke, board chair, announced on behalf of Trail to a Cure, Inc., that the inaugural Trail to a Cure Ride/Walk/Run event held May 4, 2008 on the Katy Trail in Rocheport raised more than \$12,000 for two charities: Rain of Central Missouri and amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research. Cale Mitchell, executive director of Rain, was on hand to accept a check for \$6,000 from Rettke. The funds contributed to Rain are intended to benefit persons living with HIV/AIDS in Rain's central Missouri service area. amfAR, a national organization, will use its portion of the proceeds to help fund research into a cure for HIV/AIDS.

Trail to a Cure, Inc., the non-profit that organized the May event, is a newly-formed charity. The organization intends to hold the Trail to a Cure event annually. The 2007 event involved approximately 140 riders, walkers, runners and volunteers from central Missouri and beyond. "We had people from as far away as East Moline, Illinois and Springfield, Missouri participating, and a nice mix of riders, walkers, and runners. And we were blessed with beautiful weather, which help encourage nearly 40 people make the decision to register on the day of the event," said Scott Miniea, registration volunteer and board vice-chair/secretary.

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## THE TRAIL TO A CURE STORY

When a mother of four children ranging in age from 5 to 14 hears a statistic about the increase in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS infections among young people, it can spur her into action—especially if she has also known many who succumbed to AIDS during the darkest years of the epidemic when there was no effective treatment. She may also wonder what will happen when all of her kids enter their teen/young adult years.

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She knows those of her friends who survived the darkest years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, at least in US terms, learned important lessons about how to protect themselves. How can she convey this lesson to her own children? Or better yet, what could she do to make that an unnecessary task.

She can take an idea and change the world. That's what she can do.

This is how Liz Rettke, the aforementioned mother of four, chose to act. Rettke informally gathered a ragtag group of friends and acquaintances, in groups of two or three, and began to brainstorm through conversation.

"What if we were to do an HIV/AIDS bike ride to raise money?"

"What about a walk--or a run?"

"That sounds like a fun idea to put together, and I know a lot of people who would be willing to support it."

"Me, too."

Thus began Trail to a Cure, Inc., one of central Missouri's newest non-profit organizations. Rettke, who serves as board chair of this organization, pulled together a group of about 30 individuals with an interest in the topic, beginning in May 2007. Some are mothers, like Liz. Some are bike enthusiasts. Others are friends of friends who thought organizing the event would be fun. The group began meeting in Columbia in May 2007 and communicating via an online community.

It quickly became apparent that there was a lot more work involved in getting this project going than the group had thought of originally. "But it has been fun work, and fruitful," reports Miniea, the group's vice-chair and secretary. "We have become friends through this process, and I've met people I never would have, otherwise. We learned together how to best write a mission statement, to write bylaws, and to organize ourselves. We took the opportunity to draft a statement about why we are doing this. We came up with the "MEMORY. HONOR. HOPE." tagline that appears on our logo. I think this idea came from Liz, but it was such an organic process, we all immediately adopted it. In Liz's words, we are doing this "In MEMORY of those we have lost to HIV/AIDS, in HONOR of those living with HIV/AIDS, and in HOPE of finding a cure."

One person mentioned that since 1985, when he arrived in Columbia, he has known more than 35 individuals who had died as a result of HIV/AIDS. Another mother mentioned her children and her hopes for a cure in their lifetime. Another mentioned that young people who didn't come of age during the 1980's and early 1990's didn't see the life and death consequences that HIV/AIDS had for many and continues to have for some.

Trail to a Cure's planning committee, which now included an elected board, spent week after week meeting to apply for Missouri corporate status, to prepare a federal 501(c)(3) tax exempt application, and held several small fundraising events at local businesses to cover the startup costs.

"TTAC" as the organization has become known to some, also had to adopt a logo, create informational brochures and posters, develop a web site, and begin working on its inaugural Trail to a Cure Bike Ride/Walk/Run Event, while also working with federal, state, and local agencies to gather accurate, updated statistics about the current state of the HIV/AIDS crisis at each of those levels.

The planning committee and board's next task was to choose specific beneficiaries from the 2008 event. Since HIV/AIDS research will benefit everyone world-wide, no matter where the research is done, the board decided to provide funding to amFAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research. In the area of services, the board decided to focus on Central Missouri—and Rain of Central Missouri was the obvious choice.

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Mindful that event participants like their money to go to the direct benefit of those affected by the disease, the group decided that 100 percent of the participants' sponsorships for 2008 should go to two beneficiaries: amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research, and Rain of Central Missouri. Ultimately the board was able to apply participants' 20 dollar registration fees to the cause as well.

"The only way we could pass 100 percent of the money through to amfAR and Rain was to pound the pavement and contact as many sponsors as possible. In 2008, Les Bourgeois winery and the Trailside Café and Bike Shop in Rocheport were key, but ultimately we were able to raise more than \$6,000 through sponsorships—mostly in smaller amounts," Rettke said. The group's sponsors included more than forty businesses that provided cash or in-kind donations.

One way that Trail to a Cure's planning committee raised funds was through what are becoming regular events in Columbia: monthly "Feast 2 FIGHT AIDS" events. Feast 2 FIGHT AIDS is a "dining out" fundraiser that allows supporters to simply dine on a designated date at the designated restaurant, take along a "F2FA" flyer, and present it to the server when paying. "It's a great way to show support, while you are simply enjoying a nice meal in a local restaurant, and 15% of what you spend goes to Trail to a Cure. We use the funds raised at such events to make it possible to cover the annual ride/walk/run event's costs," said Miniea. Participating restaurants included Addison's, Sophia's, Teller's Gallery and Bar, and Les Bourgeois winery, among others. "We hope to have these the first Wednesday of every month, each time at a different restaurant—and we like to focus on local establishments that are 'grass roots' like our group is," Miniea added. In addition to F2FA events, the planning committee received generous support from several local business owners for fundraising events.

Trail to a Cure 2009 is tentatively planned for Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. "We hope to double our numbers for next year, with the same kind of mix of people from all ages and ability levels getting out, enjoying the trail and one another's company, and raising funds for an important cause," Miniea added.

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