

Pulmonology Patient Navigator Climbs Hancock in Memory of Father

March 18 2015 10:55 AM



ALTON – On February 22, Kelly Keenan, Pulmonology and Cardiology Patient Navigator at OSF Saint Anthony’s Health Center, climbed 94 flights of the John Hancock Center in Chicago in remembrance of her father, Bill Little.

Bill passed away in November, 2003, of Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS), an illness he came down with after suffering a heart attack and stroke. When Kelly heard about “Hustle Up The Hancock,” a fundraiser for lung disease research and programs, the challenge was in-line with many aspects of her life.

As a patient navigator, her job is to help people who are challenged by health issues that they could not have anticipated, to serve them when their mind is distracted and steer them through the healing process. As a daughter, her thoughts were on honoring the man who molded her into the person she is.

“My dad was a great father, grandfather and community servant who was involved in many worthwhile community charities in the area,” Kelly said. “I think he would have been proud that we took on a big challenge while supporting a great cause.”

Kelly already considered herself to be in decent shape, but 1,632 steps into the Chicago skyline would require extra training.

“I had run 5Ks this past fall but stair climbing is a more intense challenge,” Kelly said. “After the first of the year, I kicked up my training by working with a personal trainer. We worked out twice a week on core strengthening exercises and I combined that with running and stair climbing.”

Having lived in Chicago, Kelly was familiar with the John Hancock Center.

“I have seen the John Hancock Center hundreds of times,” Kelly said. “But when I arrived that morning knowing I was going to attempt to run up it, I was a little intimidated.”

With her husband, Mike, by her side and her family there to cheer her on, Kelly started the Hustle.

“The air in the stairwells is pretty dry. Once you start breathing hard, your lungs begin to burn; especially the higher you get,” Kelly said. “I just kept a steady pace and never stopped.”

After 25 minutes and 6 seconds, Kelly reached the top. Mike finished in 18 minutes and 42 seconds.

“It was cool because you finished on the observation deck and got to take in the view while you rested,” Kelly said. “Plus, we were able to take the elevator down!”

In all, nearly 4,000 people participated in the event and raised over \$1.1 million. It is an accomplishment Kelly feels her father would appreciate.

Looking ahead, Kelly has her sights set on continued patient advocacy and health care fundraising. On November 8, she is going to attempt the “Skyrise Chicago” challenge. The event raises money for the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and will include the 103 flights and 2,109 steps of the Willis (Sears) Tower.

If you have questions concerning pulmonology or cardiology health, call Kelly at 618-474-6277; or email kelly.l.keenan@osfhealthcare.org.

