

SUFFER IN SILENCE: Mother's love for son with Crohn's Disease sparks foundation, 5K run, advancement for research

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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BETHALTO - When her son was diagnosed with **Crohn's Disease** in **2006** at the age of 16, **Lisa Loftus** began the painstaking process of watching her son suffer in silence.

Angela Richards, Loftus' sister, explains that not only is Crohn's a complicated disorder where the immune system turns on itself, its side effects make it difficult for one to share how they feel out of fear of embarrassment.

“No one really likes to talk about what it’s like to have the disease because of the unpleasant side effects,” Richards said.

Early morning infusions at the local hospital and changing wound dressings before heading off to complete his college coursework became the norm for Loftus and her son. With the extremely difficult experiences that she and her son had faced, she vowed to help others and their families who have been affected by the horrible disease.

A little over a year ago, Loftus and her fellow board of directors formed **Givin’ It All For Guts** and dedicated their time and efforts to raise money for Crohn’s Disease and its related illnesses.



Givin’ It All For Guts’ board of directors includes **Ashleigh Schroeder, Leah Allen, Reahn Richards, Angela Richards, Susan Hamilton, Paige Kopsie, Laura Hamilton** and Loftus herself.

“Without this board,” Loftus said, “none of this would be possible.”

The organization has worked closely with **Washington University Physician Dr. Matthew Ciorba** and his **Inflammatory Bowel Disease Research Group** to make

progress with experimental research and ultimately, finding a cure for the debilitating disease.

“Through a \$5,000 donation made by our organization, Ciorba and Washington University were able to gain headway and ultimately qualified for a federal grant to move forward with research,” Loftus said. “It may not sound like a lot, however it provided the team a little help to reach bigger things in research.”



On **Saturday, Nov. 7**, the third annual Givin’ It All For Guts 5K will be held at **8:00 a.m** . at the **Bethalto City Park**.

“We held our first run in 2013 in one of our neighborhoods with just family and friends participating,” Richards said. “It’s amazing that it turned into a large organization that we are proud of.”

Every type of 5K participant is welcome, including casual walkers and determined runners. People are also welcome to simply cheer on the runners from the sidelines.

Anyone wishing to register is welcomed to visit www.givinitallforguts.org. The fee for Saturday's is **\$30** and includes a t-shirt and a backpack. Prizes will be awarded for the top male and female runners as well as in specific age groups. Top prizes include **St. Louis Blues hockey tickets**.

All proceeds of the event will directly benefit Dr. Ciorba and his team's research in understanding and treating Crohn's Disease and its related illnesses.

Outside of their amazing philanthropy efforts, the organization has also created an online community where people can discuss the disease and its effect on their lives.

“We want to be a support for individuals and families dealing with this disease,” Loftus said. “Whether it is questions about diets, medications or every day struggles, we want to help.”