

Parkinson's Warriors

The Hayes Family
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The Hayes Family

Logan Hayes and her family are with Pacing for Parkinson's this year for the first time, but they aren't new to Parkinson's. Her dad, Ben, was diagnosed about 15 years ago. They also aren't new to Parkinson's activism – they run an annual Bull and Shrimp Roast in honor of her father that has 500 annual attendees. All proceeds are donated to the Michael J. Fox Foundation, and it's a sell-out every year. People are so motivated by her father and her family's efforts

that they donate even if they can't get a ticket to attend. Parkinson's has taken its toll on Ben, but when he sees 500 people together that have gathered because they love him, he is incredibly touched and feels loved. Logan and her aunts put on the Bull and Shrimp Roast every year – on top of Logan's law school schedule and work hours at the family tire shop business. It's massively stressful, but massively rewarding. She says she developed the necessary resilience from watching her parents.

Her father has been self-employed since he was 18 years old, building his own business first as a truck stop, and then running his own tire shop in Joppa, Maryland. He has always been a physically-oriented man, working with his hands for his living. When his Parkinson's first started, he fought for years, continuing to work. For him, it was a process of adapting. When certain things became too difficult, he didn't quit his job, or withdraw from his family. Rather, as Logan described it, he "learned to live in a new way."

Ben's wife, Connie, had to learn to live in a new way as well. Like all spouses and family members of Parkinson's patients have to do, Connie began to deal with it as simply a part of her everyday life. Connie has fought her own health struggles with cancer for years, but she has a unique perspective and incredible toughness as a result. She became the backbone of the family – caring for her husband, helping with the business, and supporting their children.

Aside from the physical struggle, that's the real challenge of Parkinson's. Learning to live in a new way. Dan Dreibelbis, a former subject of our Parkinson's Warriors series, was an FBI Agent. It was a fast-paced, intense, and fulfilling job. Ben Hayes ran his own business, and derived fulfillment from something he had created with his own two hands. Both are independent men that have seen their independence reduced by a force outside their control. Both have had to learn new limitations. But these patients and patients' families whom we've profiled so far have also shown so much dignity in their response to the disease. Dan Dreibelbis has learned humility and gratefulness from the people who help him get to the gym. Will Schaefer, profiled in our second Parkinson's Warriors story, has motivated himself to new exercise goals, and he will be running his first 5K ever after working hard with a trainer. Logan and her family are raising thousands of dollars for Parkinson's research every year. Connie Hayes

and Laura Dreibelbis have become the backbone of their families, supporting their husbands and their children through the disease.

Being a P4P participant means more than running a race. It means that like Dan, Laura, Ben, Will, Connie, and Logan, you have looked a horrible disease in the face and decided to stand up and fight. It also means you've decided to accept the love and help of others. Those actions, those choices, are incredibly dignified – and speak to the character of all of us as “Parkinson’s Warriors.” Given a choice, we’ve gone to war with the disease rather than giving up. That’s the essence of Ben Hayes, Dan Dreibelbis, Will Schaefer, and all of you who suffer, yet fight. Remind yourself of that dignity. You’ve earned it.