

The War on ALS at Computershare

Computershare IVR and Web Development Manager Mark Helisek began running years ago to stay fit. He eventually added swimming and biking to the mix to take on triathlons. That's how he became aware of Jon Blais and his story of completing an Ironman triathlon shortly after his diagnosis with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). ALS, more commonly referred to as Lou Gehrig's Disease, has killed 20 million people since it was identified in 1869 and since that time, there hasn't been any significant progress made in the treatment or finding a cure for the disease.

The Jon Blais story became very personal in 2006. Shortly after starting his current position in Canton, Mark learned that a member of his team, Computershare U.S. Web Strategist Tom Newton, was given the devastating diagnosis of ALS in 2005. "Tom is just the best guy and I kept thinking I need to do something. With guidance from Jon Blais' father, I became a member of Team Blazeman, triathletes who race in honor of Jon and his vision of winning the war on ALS," said Mark. "It was time to stop thinking and start doing something."

Now every race in which Mark participates becomes a platform for raising awareness and funds so that one day there will be hope for those with ALS and their families. "Mark's tireless efforts to fight for hope gives me hope," said Tom.

Just yesterday, Mark competed in the Rhode Island triathlon. "For me, swimming is difficult but with every stroke I just think of the courage of people like Tom and Jon and I'm able to move forward."

Mark says that he's being selfish because participating in triathlons keeps him fit physically and mentally. "It would be great if everyone was so selfish," added Tom. "Given the low level of ALS awareness, we need all the warriors we can get. And the energy and grit Mark brings to the table is truly inspiring."

To find out more about ALS go to the War on ALS site. Or visit Tom Newton's War on ALS page to find out how you can support research for finding treatment and a cure. Marks next competition as a Blazeman will be the Hartford Marathon on October 10.

"It's great that people have been moved enough to make donations," said Mark. "Even if someone can't donate, it would be great they could learn more about the disease and tell just one other person. Awareness and education will be how we beat this disease."



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