

Many continue to ask about my special friend in Boston, Zoie, the ten year who stole my heart with her poignant sign that she held last year. To my joy, Zoie and her sister were chosen for the Boston 3-day Youth Corp this year. This made them a part of the 3-day crew! Having walked in Boston last weekend, I was able to spend a good deal of time with her, before the walk by arriving early, during the 3-day on route and in camp and also on Monday prior to my flying home. To see her smile, to give her hugs and to simply get to know her better were moments I will never forget.

With this said, I would like to share a moment that Zoie and I had together while in camp, a moment that so summarizes why the 3-day events, why the time spent training, fundraising and walking is such a passion in my life and why I plan to walk until the cure is found. I know what follows is rather long, but I also know it will be worth your time to read. Tissues are optional:

This past weekend was filled with many emotions for me as I walked in the Boston 3-day event. There was the event itself, with the added bonus of it being the first 2012 SGK walk and my carrying the Futures banner in the Opening Ceremony.

However, the one emotion I was not prepared for was how my first moments with Zoie would be when I saw her on Wednesday evening when I arrived at her home and how it would be to see her with the Youth Corp during the 3-day event. As I flew east, my thoughts continued to go back to when I saw her on Belmont Hill, filled with grief and how the 3-day community swept her up in their collective arms to support she and her sisters.

My first chance to see her was at her home on Wednesday evening, prior to going to Chili's with her sisters and Paul. Her smile and her hug was huge as my thoughts again returned to the top of Belmont Hill. Throughout the remainder of the evening and throughout Thursday as we enjoyed time with each other at the restaurant, traveled to Framingham and then enjoyed the crew day and rehearsal, my heart continued to be warmed by her energy and smile.

Throughout Friday, I had many opportunities to see Zoie and her sister, Erin, as they went about their YC tasks. I was thrilled again as I watched them opening up and expressing themselves more and more with the 3-day walkers and crew. To see how being with the 3-day community was enriching their lives and providing a respite from their daily challenges, again showed the strength and power of the 3-day community and how it changes lives.

On Friday evening, I had my first quiet time with Zoie as I was charging my batteries in the dining tent, a moment I will always treasure. Having left the YC for a few moments, Zoie approached me, sat in my lap and looked at me and stated, "Jim, I went to the Remembrance Tent by myself. What is it all about?" Thoughts went through my mind on how to explain this to her, which I did. As I described what the tent was about, I could see her processing what I said and

trying to put order to the words as it related to her mom's death. She stepped away, then stepped back, gave me a hug and asked, "Jim, would you stop by my tent tonight and say good-night." My heart was touched as I felt a real connection was developing.

As I traveled to my tent after the Camp Show, I met a crew member who asked me to read something special that she had found in the Remembrance Tent, a note from Zoie to her mom that she had photographed. Reading the note, the tears were finally surfacing as I was losing my edge to the emotions that I had been experiencing since my arrival.

Going to the Remembrance Tent, I spent time reading the note she had written, trying to imagine what was going through her young mind, trying to understand what she must be feeling about her mother's death several years ago. I realized this was not necessary as the words spoke for themselves.

With her sister's permission, I have attached a photo of her note to her mother. Why do I walk? It should not be hard to figure out. I continue to walk, as many do, so that Zoie, along with many others will not have to deal with the death of a loved one, so that they will not have to go to the Remembrance Tent to leave a note to those they have lost.