



# The University of Pittsburgh Asthma Institute

at UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

MAY 2010  
NEWSLETTER

## ASTHMA INSTITUTE supports racewalker and severe asthmatic Stephen Gaudet - Boston Marathon 2010

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010, walking for the Asthma Institute and proudly wearing our name, Stephen Gaudet finished the Boston Marathon – 26 miles in 7 hours, 17 minutes – an impressive feat for any individual. Stephen isn't just any individual, however; he is a very determined, very severe asthmatic.

Stephen was diagnosed with asthma when he was only two months old. For over 50 years, he has been through countless days and weeks on ventilators, endured over 120 emergency room visits, and been admitted to the hospital 98 times since birth. On his best days, his lung function is only 40% of normal. His condition forced him into early retirement and prevents him from working full time.

So what inspires a severe asthmatic such as Stephen to enter a marathon? "I do it because it makes me feel good about myself... even people with severe lung disease can do some pretty amazing things if they have the will and the passion," he said.

The journey to that finish line hasn't been an easy one. Despite being constantly short of breath, out of shape and unable to work full time, he decided in 2004 to put the advice he had given as a Respiratory Therapist to use in his own life.

Stephen describes the beginning of his exercise program: "When I first started walking for fitness, I was in such bad shape I could barely go a few blocks without suffocating; on many days I was too short of breath to walk at all.

"Despite the concerns and doubts of some, I kept pushing myself to go a little farther each time." He completed his first marathon in July of 2005 and has finished over a dozen other races. Last year, he became the first person with documented severe lung disease ever to finish the Boston Marathon.

Even now, marathons are still very much a challenge. In preparation for and during the marathon, his routine includes a nebulizer treatment every 7 miles of the course, multiple doses of prednisone and very frequent use of his inhaler. He also can only walk about 100 meters or so before he has to slow down or rest because of shortness of breath. But he doesn't quit. In fact, he credits walking with saving his life.

Stephen continues to work with Dr. Wenzel to treat and control his asthma. We at the Asthma Institute continue to be inspired by his passion and determination.

If you would like to follow his blog, please visit:  
<http://breathinstephen.com/>



*"I do it because it makes me feel good about myself...."*

*Even people with severe lung disease can do some pretty amazing things if they have the will and the passion."*



## Dr. Wenzel receives the 2010 Recognition Award for Scientific Accomplishments

We are proud to announce that the Asthma Institute's Director, Dr. Sally Wenzel was awarded the 2010 Recognition Award for Scientific Accomplishments at the American Thoracic Society's International Conference in New Orleans on May 17, 2010.



The Recognition Award for Scientific Accomplishments is given each year to ATS members who demonstrate outstanding scientific contributions in basic or clinical research to the understanding, prevention and treatment of respiratory disease or critical illness. Dr. Wenzel is given this award in recognition of her many years investigating asthma.

Dr. Wenzel has a long standing interest in severe asthma, its phenotypes and their pathogenesis, an interest which started during her 19 yrs at National Jewish Health and the University of Colorado. She has continued these projects in Pittsburgh where she is one of four NHLBI funded investigators in the Severe Asthma Research Program (SARP network).

She has published widely on differing inflammatory phenotypes in asthma and their relation to clinical characteristics. Her bench research is focused on epithelial changes in severe asthma which contribute to these different clinical and inflammatory phenotypes. Finally, she is actively involved in clinical trials in severe asthma, incorporating these phenotypic differences in predicting response to therapy.

"I am extremely honored to be chosen for this award," said Dr. Wenzel. "The legacy of names of previous awardees reads as a list of 'Who's Who' in the respiratory world, and I am humbly delighted to be considered among those names!"

Dr. Wenzel served on the Pulmonary-Allergy Advisory Committee to the FDA, was Assembly Chair for the American Thoracic Society (ATS) section on Allergy, Immunology and Inflammation, and chaired the ATS International Conference Committee. She was Deputy Editor for the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* 2005-2009, and was awarded the ATS Elizabeth Rich Award in recognition for her efforts on behalf of women in the ATS in 2005.

"To be recognized for my contribution to a body of work in asthma and severe asthma in particular is a tremendous but humbling experience," Dr. Wenzel said, "I am very hopeful that some of these efforts have had and will continue to have a positive impact on the lives of patients with asthma."

*For information on any of our studies, please call the asthma research line at: 866-804-5278*

University of Pittsburgh  
Asthma Institute  
@ UPMC/UPSOM

UPMC Montefiore  
3459 Fifth Ave NW 628  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Phone:  
866-804-5278; 412-647-9955

Fax:  
412-605-1999

E-mail:  
[asthmainstitute@upmc.edu](mailto:asthmainstitute@upmc.edu)

Web Address:  
[www.asthmainstitute.pitt.edu](http://www.asthmainstitute.pitt.edu)