

Remarks at the Advocate Lutheran General “Derby for Life” Gala

Saturday, November 19, 2011

Good evening, my name is Mark Valentino.

On behalf of Sharon and Jennifer Marston (who are with me on stage); Sharon’s three sons, Jack, Michael, and Matthew; and the board of directors of the Jack H. Marston II Melanoma Fund, many of whom are present this evening; we would like to express our sincere gratitude for this wonderful honor this evening.

We are grateful to our good friends at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital and to Dr. Jon Richards, for providing us the opportunity to collaborate with all of you for the past eight years, in a joint effort to find a cure for melanoma.

We are grateful because the incredible healthcare team at Advocate Lutheran General believed in us when we were just getting started with our foundation.

They, too, believed in our mission of making everyone around us aware of the risks of melanoma; of promoting preventive measures that every adult and child should take against this disease; and of envisioning the day when we could say that each and every case of melanoma would be completely curable.

We are grateful because Sharon and her family found Dr. Richards at a time in their lives when they needed someone to believe in; to find comfort in; and to ultimately form a partnership with.

All of the good work that we do is in honor of Jack H. Marston II.

Jack was a loving husband and father who gave greatly to his family and friends. He was a baseball, soccer, and swimming coach who not only enjoyed coaching his own children, but mentored hundreds of others; and he was one of the greatest friends a fellow like me could have in this world.

He left us much too soon, but he left us with a lasting legacy.

Before Jack died in the summer of 2004, after a brave battle against melanoma, he taught us how to live our lives. He was a courageous patient and appreciated all that Dr. Richard's did for him and his family.

The proof that he was a great teacher can be found in the achievements of Jack and Sharon's four children. They have never forgotten their father's love and support and each are active members of the foundation that bears their dad's name. The Marston's are the type of family this world needs more of.

We are grateful to Advocate Lutheran General for honoring Jack's legacy by naming the Jack H. Marston II Rooftop Healing Garden. It has become a place of hope and healing and one where we know Jack would be proud to be associated with.

Finally, we are grateful to the thousands of donors who have embraced our cause.

Each year, when we gather in Jack's adopted hometown of Glen Ellyn, we join with more than two thousand runners and walkers to raise money in support of the Jack H. Marston II Melanoma Fund. In addition, we assemble teams to run in the Chicago, New York, and Boston marathons.

Each of the families that join with us has a story to tell and a link to our foundation.

Many are melanoma survivors or the families and friends whose loved ones bravely fought, but ultimately died, from this dreaded disease.

They run and walk with us in hope and in honor.

They are an inspiration to us all.

This past October, one of Dr. Richard's patients, Stacey, ran on our Chicago Marathon team. It was Stacey's sixth Chicago Marathon. Stacey is grateful to Dr. Richard's and his efforts and to the foundation. She credits us with her being with us today. Stacey is as tough as nails and an inspiration to all that she meets. It is we, who are truly grateful to her.

Also this year, in Glen Ellyn, you would have seen adults and children of all ages wearing brightly colored T-shirts that read “We’re in it for Linda.” Linda was so looking forward to be with us but lost her battle just three days prior to the race. Yet, there were her parents, family, and friends, walking in her memory and walking for a cure.

The end result of all of this fundraising is that we can provide Dr. Richards and his team at Advocate Lutheran General with nearly \$300,000 in support of their research activities. We look forward to furthering our support in the years to come.

In closing, I’d like to share that every October when we gather for our 5K run and walk, we call it “This Run’s for Jack.”

It is a fitting tribute to an incredible person who touched our lives in a special way.

So, tonight, in accepting this honor, we say:

“This one’s for you, Jack. Thank you for your legacy and love.

“Keep looking out for us each and every step of the way.”