

In step with March of Dimes

Chance meeting with rocker leads restaurateur to key role with nonprofit

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Just a few years ago, Carl Bachmann barely knew what the March of Dimes was about. This morning, April 25, he plans to participate in the annual walk at Eisenhower Park to raise money for the nonprofit organization, which is dedicated to preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. But he's not just another walker: Bachmann is chairman of the board of the Long Island chapter.

How he became involved and then sprinted to the chairmanship was the result of an encounter seven years ago with one of Long Island's best-known rockers, Dee Snider of the heavy metal group Twisted Sister.

Bachmann, 42, of Port Jefferson, owns the 10 Ruby Tuesday restaurants on Long Island. He was distributing promotional materials for the restaurant at Fitness Express, the Mount Sinai gym he had recently joined, when Snider was working out there.

"I thought he was a delivery boy at the gym," Snider said in an e-mail interview. "I later found out he was the owner of a major chain of Long Island restaurants who was personally delivering invitations for the opening of his new location. That impressed the hell out of me."

Snider, a Long Island native who is the national spokesman for the March of Dimes annual fundraiser Bikers for Babies, asked Bachmann if he would support his ride.

"I thought he might take a lower-level sponsorship for my ride," said Snider, who got involved with the nonprofit because two of his children were born prematurely. "He said he couldn't at that time, but maybe next year. I figured that was the end of it."

But the next year Bachmann sought out Snider, telling him, "I'm ready to become a sponsor for your ride," Snider said, "and [he] wound up taking a Platinum sponsorship" — at that



Carl Bachmann had a random meeting with Twisted Sister frontman Dee Snider, inset, seven years ago that led him to become chairman of the Long Island chapter of the March of Dimes.

time, a \$5,000 commitment. Bachmann also donated food and, inspired by Snider, joined the Bikers for Babies organizing committee. "Then I got involved in March for Babies, which was then called Walk America," Bachmann said. "You know how that goes — two committees led to three committees. . . . Then I was asked to join the board three years ago."

This morning he'll be joining about 160 Ruby Tuesday employees participating in the March of Dimes March for Babies at Eisenhower Park, an event also held in Hauppauge and Long Beach that typically attracts about 5,000 partici-

pants on Long Island. "Last year my little company raised about \$12,000 that day," he said. "Our goal this year is \$25,000."

Before and after the walk, he said, he welcomes the participants and spends time meeting children who have benefited from the March of Dimes. "I love meeting the families, hearing their stories," he said. "Some are great and some are not as happy, but they're all important."

Bachmann said that after joining the board of directors, "I was really tied to the belief in what we did, the mission. . . . Research is so intangible, but it's so amazing

what we do emotionally, physically, mentally to support families" in part through the March of Dimes' Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Family Support program.

"Not just moms and babies," he said, "but fathers and siblings" also benefit from the program.

Even as he runs his restaurants and a new catering venture, Bachmann says his commitment to the nonprofit is unwavering. "I kind of feel indebted to the March of Dimes," he said. "I have three healthy, beautiful children."

The March of Dimes, in turn, is grateful to him. "Carl has influenced our Long Island board by inviting new community leaders that have the same passion for our mission as he has," says Linda Shapiro, community director of the Long Island chapter. He also has been responsible for funding other events, including the annual March for Babies Campaign, Bikers for Babies, Signature Chefs Auction and Joe Namath Celebrity Golf Tournament.

"I get a lot of credit for bringing Carl into the fold," Snider adds, "but that's just dumb luck on my part."

"The lesson to be learned here," Snider said, "is that you never know what might come of a contact you make. Reach out your hand. It's a chance . . . / It could change your world for the better."



The 2009 March of Dimes March for Babies on Long Island; the event typically attracts 5,000 participants.

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