

# First Annual Snowball Cancer Challenge: A man and his mission

by Tammy Paczkowski

Twenty years ago this past March, Nick Keller of Richmond, lost his beloved mother to Breast Cancer. Mary Jane Keller was only 56 years young when she succumbed to the ravenous disease; Nick, was only 34 at the time. Twenty years later and his own 56th birthday around the corner, Nick felt as though he needed to do something to honor his mother and her battle with cancer and celebrate life! And so the story begins.

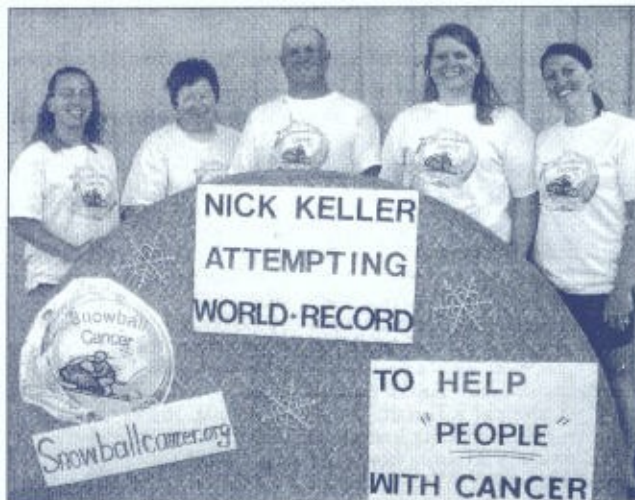
Nick, an avid and longtime snowmobile enthusiast, was on one of many of the seasons excursions to Wisconsin. There he met Jane, a deputy sheriff with the Dane County Sheriff's department. Jane had been diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. During their trip, Nick and his friends became acquainted with Jane and she had told them of her wish to learn to ride a snowmobile and go on a ride. With Nick's help, Jane's wish was granted in February of 2008. Unfortunately, Jane passed away March of 2009 before she was to enjoy her second outing. It is the lives of those like his mother and Jane that Nick found his purpose and mission: to raise awareness, money and resources to help those stricken with cancer and their families, with no boundaries! It was also the birth of the 1st Annual Snowball Cancer Challenge!

Mr. Keller is known as the "mileage man" in snowmobile circles. During the season, Nick averages over 200 miles per day and over 5000 miles per season enjoying his sport. He is a member of local and state snowmobile clubs and associations and volunteers in other ways to many community organizations in our area. With that in mind, Nick decided that he would attempt to break the world record for most miles ridden on a snowmobile in 60 consecutive days and raise funds and awareness for his cause. His ride will begin some-

time between December 2009 and January 2010, depending on Mother Nature, of course! Nick will be travelling across the States of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, which we will update regularly. The current world record is 12,163 miles; no small feat!

Nick and Janet Keller, owners of Nick Keller Masonry of Richmond, are very community oriented and volunteer countless hours of their time to various organizations. They have three lovely daughters and enjoy a warm, close knit family unit, dedicated to helping others. So, when Nick approached his family with his idea, they jumped right in to help! His family launched the Keller Family Community Foundation, a non-profit organization, applied for 501(3)(c) status. This organization will host this national event known as the 1st Annual Snowball Cancer Challenge, which will allow those interested, to ride along with Nick in his attempt to break the world record. The deadline to complete this challenge has been earmarked for March 10, 2010.

As most of us have experienced at one time or another, through a friend, loved one or our own journey, cancer most certainly is a disease that knows no boundaries. It is not discriminating and assuredly has no respect for life. It matters not if you are man or woman, rich or poor, young or old. Recently in this community, an outpouring of love and support was shown for one of our own; Officer Duane Heinen. Duane, a young family man and police officer is facing an opponent far more deadly and cunning than those he might have faced in his years of military service. Our communities came together for one common cause on October 1st and that was to support Duane and his family in his battle against brain cancer. Nick Keller and his mission, will help those like Duane



The Keller family displays their logo t-shirts and Snowball Cancer Challenge goals. From left to right are: daughter Melissa, wife Janet, Nick, daughter Carrie, and daughter Julie.

and his family by easing the difficulties surrounding those enduring cancer. They aim to help with things such as: travel expenses to treatments, help with bills, food and clothing and other necessities of life, medicines not covered by insurance or their copays just to name a few. These things which we sometimes take for granted can be a real source of stress during times illness. Please help Nick help ease those burdens!

Currently, Nick's biggest challenge will be to find sponsors and funding for the ride itself. A few of snowmobile manufacturers are looking to possibly help sponsor his ride. There will be expense such as gas, food and lodging that he will incur during the run. If you would like to sponsor the ride please feel free to contact Melissa Ngeno at 612-730-9684 or locally at 597-3052. You may also email to: snowballcancer@gmail.com

Should you wish to make a donation, which is Tax Deductible for donations over \$2.00, you can mail check or money order to:

Keller Family Community

Foundation

C/O The State Bank of Richmond  
P.O. Box 164  
Richmond, MN 56368

You may also make a donation through their website via PayPal. For more information, please visit their website at [www.snowballcancer.org](http://www.snowballcancer.org).

If you are a devoted Facebook or Twitter aficionado, look them up for updates and news as well!

Again, should you have questions or need further information, please contact Melissa Ngeno at 612-730-9684 or locally at 597-3052 or email at: snowballcancer@gmail.com

Thank you to all in advance for your support for "The Man, His Sled and Miles for Cancer" and stay tuned for the announcement of his send off event!

Picture is attached-The Keller family displays their logo t-shirts and Snowball Cancer Challenge goals. From left to right: Daughter Melissa, wife Janet, Nick, daughters Carrie and Julie.