

# A man, his sled, and miles of snow Keller to embark on "Snowball Cancer Challenge"

By Steve Swenson

There was a confluence of circumstances up Richmond way that have recently led up to the launching of a fundraising plan that is as unique as it is ambitious.

Those circumstances have led to the beginnings of the "Snowball Cancer Challenge" -- a snowmobiling event geared at raising awareness, (as well as money), for cancer in general, and for those suffering from it in this area in particular.

Nick Keller, who along with his wife Janet and crew, operate Nick Keller Masonry out of Richmond, has long wondered how he could create some sort of memorial for his mother, Mary Jane Keller, who died as a result of breast cancer in March of 1989. She was 56 years old at the time.

As Nick turns 56 this year, twenty years after his mother's passing, he got even more of a bug to do something.

But what?

Then a local snowmobile dealership put an idea in his head that made it all come together.

"What should I do for a memorial for mother? I was always asking myself," Nick said. "Then it all kind of clicked together."

The idea? Why not set a new world's record for the amount of miles traveled on the seat of a snowmobile within sixty days?

The old record, after all, is only the 12,163 miles set in Maine last winter. (That record is listed in a record book you might have heard of, but we can't yet mention it here.)

And since the idea was hatched, Nick has jumped into this new challenge with both feet. (And four other sets of feet from the women in his life have jumped in as well.)

The family has already formed a non-profit organization and has dug its heels in to make a local family's goal of making this local event a national one as well. The four major snowmobile companies are being wooed for sponsorship and plans are being made for a trek through Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan this winter that



The Keller family, Melissa, Nick, Janet and Julie, are busy organizing the "Snowball Challenge" from their Richmond, Minnesota, headquarters while the third Keller daughter, Carrie, is assisting from her home in Australia where she does fundraising for a living.

will not only make the "Snowball Cancer Challenge" a record-breaking event, but a financial boon for local cancer victims as well.

"We want to raise money for cancer, but we want to see where it goes," Julie Keller said. "Almost everybody knows somebody suffering with the disease locally, we'd like to be able to help those people out."

And that is what is driving the Keller family these days. Lofty goals of a big, snowy send-off from Richmond this winter with numerous sleds alongside Nick, and then for the next 60 days of at least 250-mile-a-day snowmobile runs with events and sleds accompanying him at every turn - well it just makes the family smile just to think about it.

And the goal of eclipsing the 12,163-mile record is secondary to the thought of how much money could be raised along the way for a local foundation with donations of any size from individuals and corporations.

*The man, his sled,  
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The entire dream, the family says, hinges on finding sponsorship and support for all that would be involved in a 60-day snowmobile run, including such necessities as gas and food and overnight lodging.

The family is optimistic it will all happen.

"We hope to shatter the record," Julie said, "but if we just break it that will be fine."

To find out more about the event, visit their web site at [snowballcancer.org](http://snowballcancer.org).