

Team Gopez

making history at the 2008 MS Walk & Fun Run in NSW



Team Gopez – Hyde Park, Sydney.

Every year the MS Walk and Fun Run attracts thousands of enthusiastic supporters all walking or running for a cause – to raise money to support people with MS. This year one particular team walked themselves into the history books of MS Australia as the highest fundraising team ever.

Team Gopez, lead by husband and wife team Perry and Annette Lopez, organised and inspired 105 team members to raise over \$60,000 to support people with MS. "Team Gopez is Annette's creation," says Perry. "I was diagnosed with MS four years ago. It took me a while to come to terms with having MS but then I got inspired, especially with all the loving support I received from my wife, friends and family."

Perry wasn't well enough to participate in their first event three years ago. Instead his wife ran with a team of six. But in their second year Perry joined in. "Last year we had 40 people and set a target of \$20,000. We just got there. This year I wanted to have 100 people and raise \$50,000 and we did it. Maybe through having MS I was meant to be a fundraiser! Up until a couple of years ago I had a stressful job running a marketing agency but after dealing with bladder and major fatigue problems, I stopped working. For me it was all about quality of life," says Perry.

So how does a team of 105 people (and three dogs) raise such an amount? It's all about networking says Perry. "My dad has been in local

government and council for 35 years and we thought we could engage a lot of companies. So we wrote a letter which he used for donations and sponsorship and we modified it for our other contacts. Even my personal trainer, Aaron Barnett from Fitness First Chatswood, gave the letter to his clients," says Perry.

"My friend Joe owns a pub in Paddington called The Four in Hand, and before he knew it he had raised \$5,000. But when he saw that my wife Annette had raised more, he pushed it up to \$8,000. He's very competitive!"

"My friends and family have been fantastic. My brother Anthony works for Bush's pet foods and they supplied us with money and caps.

When it comes to raising funds people create some amazing activities. "The son of a friend of mine raffled off the principal at his school. The winner got the principal to carry his bag for the day, clean his desk and do other chores," laughs Perry.

The other exciting aspect for Team Gopez members was the online fundraising facility. "The MS fundraising website is fantastic and people love the interaction. It's a massive plus for the event. We wouldn't have been as successful without it," explains Perry.

For many people with MS, fatigue is a common symptom and managing a team the size of Team Gopez requires time and energy. Perry says it's a matter of conserving energy and using it in the right places. "I try not to let

fatigue get hold of me. Sometimes I need to be a couch potato but other days when I'm fatigued I try hard to fit in my walk. It's not easy but Annette and I made a commitment."

Perry realises that not everyone has an expansive network of friends and family. "It's amazing how many people we know when we start writing down names. When these people realise that MS is a lifetime disease and that their contribution, small or large, helps in a huge way, they will be engaged."

Following up is an important part of the fundraising process and Perry and Annette are just as committed to this stage as they are to the lead-up stages. "We will follow up by sending a certificate to all major donors and a letter to each team member. We also go out with the team after the event to celebrate our achievement, usually to a local establishment for lunch and drinks."

For Team Gopez, the challenge continues. "If we can raise more money next year then I'm doing my job. If other teams want to challenge us then I've also done my job. Next year we might go for the \$100K!"

Want to be a part of Team Gopez for 2009?

If you would like to join a successful fundraising team and have a load of fun in the process, please contact Perry on palopez@optusnet.com.au or 0417 238 796.